

# Successes and Challenges in CSHP Membership Trends

Bruce Millin

In November 2013, I attended the Governance Summit presented by the Canadian Society of Association Executives, which brought together association executive officers from across the country to discuss the challenges facing and opportunities available to associations like the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists (CSHP). The following were some of the key trends in association infrastructure that were highlighted:

- members not seeing the value of belonging to an association
- increasingly rapid drop-off in member participation after initial test for value
- static or declining association membership

Over the past summer, CSHP took a look in the mirror, to find out if these trends reflect our Society's own situation. Here is a brief summary of what we learned through our analysis of membership demographics from 2008/2009 to 2012/2013.

The most gratifying of our findings was that membership in CSHP is growing! The total membership count in 2012/2013 reached 3247, a 5% increase over the previous year. In fact, the number of pharmacists who are members of CSHP reached a 5-year high in the most recent membership year. Student membership also reached a 5-year high in 2012/2013, with about 100 more student members than in previous years. The good news continued in the category of new members: after a few years of declining numbers of new members, 2012/2013 saw an increase in people joining CSHP for the first time, recovering to levels seen in 2008/2009. From a membership standpoint, then, the trend is positive. CSHP is attracting more members, including more members who are new to practice. Our next question was, "Are we able to keep members once they join?"

Three important metrics that CSHP examined were the membership retention rate, the member loss rate, and the membership turnover period. These metrics provide a picture of how well CSHP does at keeping members once they join. Retention of members is strong, with the Society consistently retaining at least 75% of its members from year to year and, conversely, losing less than 25%. At a loss rate between 20% and 25%, the membership turnover period is 4 to 5 years, meaning

that, without the injection of new members, CSHP's membership would disappear entirely within 4 to 5 years. However CSHP has so far been successful in attracting new members to over-compensate for the loss.

A closer look at these metrics shows that the first 2 years of membership are the most critical in determining if a member will find value in what CSHP offers.

In this regard, the retention rate for members who renew beyond their second year of active membership is a healthy 69%. In contrast, the retention rate drops to 60% among first-year pharmacist members and to 35% among pharmacy residents and postgraduate students transitioning from training to "Active" membership. Energy and focus need to be directed to these target groups to help them find value in CSHP membership.

As I learned at the Governance Summit, a successful 21st century association is one that can focus on the value that it provides to its members. CSHP is a powerful organization that supports its members in the development and pursuit of excellence in hospitals and other collaborative health care settings, as confirmed by our growing membership. However, the Society's ability to continue to lead practice will be undermined if we do not capture the loyalty of hospital pharmacists as they transition from educational and training programs to practice. To paraphrase Albert Einstein, let's try not to become an association of success, but rather to become an association of value.



---

**Bruce Millin**, BSc(Pharm), ACPR, is President Elect and Internal Liaison for the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists.

**Acknowledgement:** I would like to acknowledge Emma Attfield, CSHP Intern during summer 2013, who compiled the data presented here.