

CSHP—An Organization of Volunteers

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The Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists (CSHP) has a new strategic plan that will carry the organization through to 2018. One of the plan's key strategic areas is Member and Volunteer Engagement, and a strategic goal in this area is to develop a thriving volunteer base. As I was drafting this commentary, in early April 2016, National Volunteer Week (April 10–16) was approaching, putting volunteers front and centre. This designated week is a time to formally recognize volunteers across Canada for their time and commitment to their respective organizations.

Simply put, CSHP would not exist without its volunteers. Apart from the work of the small, dedicated paid staff at the main office in Ottawa, the majority of what CSHP accomplishes in terms of advocacy, professional development, promotion of best practices, facilitation of research, and recognition of excellence is the result of volunteers coming together to make all these things happen. As such, CSHP is not only a voluntary organization, but it is also an organization of volunteers.

One of the keys to a thriving volunteer base is to ensure that volunteers see that their time commitment is making a difference. The CSHP 2015 practice excellence initiative was a success precisely because the volunteers working on it saw the huge impact that their work had on pharmacists on a daily basis. The hope is that the new CSHP project focused on improving patient health outcomes will have a similar impact on the volunteers who have expressed interest in advancing this practice excellence initiative.

Another key to a thriving volunteer base is to highlight that each volunteer has the ability to make a difference. No matter how small the effort, no matter how limited the time commitment, each and every contribution can make a difference to the individual and to the organization.

Volunteering is a learning process, one that offers individuals an excellent way to develop their leadership skills. The lessons learned while chairing or participating on a task force or committee can be translated to the workplace.

I am often asked by staff in my own workplace for opportunities to develop their leadership skills outside of the classroom setting. I always encourage them to get involved in CSHP committees as a way to develop some of these skills. This committee participation has the added bonus of facilitating succession planning for both CSHP and individual institutions.

Canada's National Volunteer Week serves to focus the country's attention on volunteers, but recognition must not be just a yearly event. Recognition must be ongoing, and it need not follow a formal process. A simple "thank you" can go a long way.

On behalf of the CSHP Executive, to all volunteers, for all of your efforts—Thank You!



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