

# Investing in the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists

*Jody Ciuffo*

In my first year as the CEO of the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists (CSHP), I have been grateful for the warm welcome I have received from members, our Board of Directors and branches across the country, and our staff team in Ottawa. This is especially important to me as a newcomer to both pharmacy and the healthcare sector. Drug shortages, pharmacare, excellence in practice, the opioid crisis, and other issues at the heart of patient care are all responses to some of the social challenges I've worked on throughout my career in national not-for-profit associations. Getting to work alongside pharmacy professionals whose primary concern is caring for the well-being of Canadians, especially for the frail and vulnerable among us, is an ongoing inspiration every day in this position.

The Board gave me a clear mandate to elevate the profile of hospital pharmacists, grow membership, engage the hospital pharmacy community, and amplify CSHP's collective voice. More importantly, they conveyed their clear commitment to fundamental change for the Society and willingness to fully collaborate to make this happen.

My predecessor, Myrella Roy, faced a significant challenge when she first became the Executive Director. With ingenuity and hard work, Dr Roy built a flourishing society over her 15 years at CSHP. During that time, the association world at large faced changes that have disrupted membership-based societies around the globe. The growth of niche associations, more competition for membership and sponsorship dollars, and the significant cutbacks in professional development by employers have challenged long-standing member organizations in virtually every sector. Within our world of hospital pharmacy practice, significant changes within the pharmaceutical industry have affected the nature of funding, relationships among industry, the healthcare sector, educational institutions, and, of course, professional associations. The business models under which CSHP flourished in the past are no longer enough to deliver the value that members expect and deserve.

To create the fundamental change required to operate in the new association world, the Executive Committee worked extensively with the Board, Branch Presidents, and affiliated

boards to create a strategy to regain sustainability. Recent years have seen declining membership numbers and drops in revenues from a variety of sources. Looking down the road, we saw years of deficits ahead and felt we had a choice to make: either cut back on our services and programs for members to balance the budget or create a multi-year plan to invest in our Society to make sure we'd still be here to support the future of hospital pharmacy practice.

Of course, we chose to invest.

In a show of unanimous support, CSHP National, our Branches, and the affiliated boards agreed to contribute financially towards the common goal of becoming more member-driven, and offering more programs, services, educational opportunities, and relevance to today's generation of members, supporters, and students. Over 4 years, we will co-invest close to \$1 million, with National contributing 85%, the Branches 12%, and the affiliated boards 3% to return to balanced budgets by 2023.

We're calling this a co-investment because of the collaborative way we worked together to find this path to sustainability. Over 4 months, the Board, the Branches, and the affiliated boards discussed several options at length and agreed upon this plan whereby Branches pay an amount according to a formula that balances their percentage of CSHP members and their ability to pay. We all agreed that it was fair, affordable, and, simply, the right thing to do.

The strategy will involve a large investment in human and technological infrastructure to allow us to deliver greater member value. The National Office now has a Marketing and Communications Department, led by seasoned Director Clara Wicke, to connect our community more closely and give voice to the



profession beyond our own membership. The office also has a larger pharmacy practice team under Christina Adams in the newly created position of Chief Pharmacy Officer. She and two Professional Practice Specialists will expand our programs and services and help our volunteer committees realize their goals. Overhauling our IT systems will give CSHP an edge in identifying and meeting the needs of diverse segments of the hospital pharmacy sector.

For the first time since 2013, CSHP conducted a comprehensive national survey of members to gather data about members' perceptions, beliefs, and preferences. The survey was designed to explore the propositions developed during the work on the Strategy Towards Sustainability: the big ideas of membership for pharmacy technicians, specialization, and a name change for the Society, as well as CSHP's value proposition and member priorities. At the same time, we conducted a separate survey with lapsed members to gain insight on why they left.

Almost 1 out of every 3 members took the 20-minute survey, a remarkably robust response rate, with 1012 respondents from our 3602 members. In addition, 9% or 515 respondents from the 5585 former members who gave up their memberships within the last 10 years cared enough to share their thoughts.

We needed to hear directly from our members why they belong to CSHP. The top 3 reasons were: "to belong to a professional association that represents high standards of practice", "to stay on top of news and developments in hospital pharmacy", and "to access information that makes me better at my job". Professional excellence underlines our *raison d'être*.

It should be no surprise, then, to learn that an overwhelming proportion of members (86%) described themselves as very or somewhat satisfied with the *Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy (CJHP)*, viewing it as a particularly valuable resource.

Only the residency program scored higher, with a satisfaction level of 89%. Furthermore, the Journal is CSHP's best known product/service among members, with only 4% of respondents stating they were unfamiliar with the publication. Members value the high standards and quality that the *CJHP* Editorial Board and production team have insisted upon.

As part of the Strategy Towards Sustainability, CSHP committed to reporting regularly on targets for membership numbers, conference revenues, social media statistics, and other key indicators of success. To take place annually in the future, the national survey of members' views on programs, services, and the overall experience of belonging will be a critical measure in assessing progress and making adjustments along the way.

This past year has set the stage for CSHP's new beginnings as our 2015–2020 Strategic Plan comes to its natural end. The planning phase for 2020 and beyond is well underway, and this year will see the launch of our new Strategic Plan for 2020–2023.

The Strategy Towards Sustainability is our community's shared promise to ensure hospital pharmacy practice is always evolving into something better. I encourage you to recommit to our passionate community by stepping up to volunteer at the Branch or National level, participating in a CSHP conference, trying us out once again if you've let your membership lapse, or thinking critically about the knowledge explored in this issue of the *CJHP*. I'm genuinely honoured to be part of this community, and I look forward to the continued inspiration from the leadership and expertise of our volunteers and staff.

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**Jody Ciuffo**, MBA, is Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists.