

# Patient Safety and Opportunistic Advocacy

Neil Johnson

Whether it's a story about a patient's unfortunate experience in hospital or one about an adverse drug reaction that has disabled or killed, patient safety is everywhere in the media. Barely a day goes by without an article on this topic in the newspaper or a feature piece on the six o'clock news.

In the midst of this attention many professional organizations are scrambling to show that they are at the forefront of patient safety. CSHP is participating in this dialogue within the health care community and is advocating for the role that hospital pharmacists play in patient safety. Some of you might ask whether the attention resulting from unfortunate patient outcomes should be used to further the goals of a professional group. At best, this may seem rather opportunistic.

I believe that CSHP is well positioned to put forward credible and important information about patient safety and that this is a great opportunity for hospital pharmacists to show what we contribute. Part of CSHP's Vision is to be "the influential voice for hospital pharmacy". To meet that goal, we must speak with credibility and with one voice, and we must speak up at just the right time.

The hospital pharmacists represented by CSHP do constitute one of the most credible and trusted resources for patient safety. Let's look at the supporting facts. CSHP developed hospital pharmacy residencies over 30 years ago to train pharmacists in hospital practice, and residency graduates have advanced the profession considerably. CSHP has led hospital pharmacists in embracing and implementing direct patient care. For example, through the Direct Patient Care Curriculum (just one of many CSHP programs and resources), hospital pharmacists have advanced their practice in an area that has been proven to enhance safety. CSHP's standards of practice have allowed hospital pharmacy practice to grow in the areas of unit-dose services, formulary management, drug utilization,

and drug information. CSHP thus has a wealth of credibility to draw upon.

Speaking with one voice is also important. CSHP enjoys a strong volunteer membership base, and over the past few months, many members in each of the Society's Branches have



written letters to legislators, bureaucrats, and regulators. These letters have conveyed a single message — that hospital pharmacists make a difference. Speaking as a collective with a consistent message, one that puts the patient's well-being at the centre of our practice, is a strong and powerful tool for advancing our profession.

Finally, we must speak when the opportunity arises. Knowing when to speak up — seizing the moment — is critical. In times of crisis, people turn to organizations they can trust, organizations like CSHP. By speaking out when the time is right and by demonstrating our capable and proven leadership through the consistent voice of our members, we can make great gains.

Are we being opportunistic in the patient safety dialogue? Yes, we are! CSHP's Vision sets the goal of being the influential voice for hospital pharmacy, so we must speak together, with credibility and conviction, to put hospital pharmacy on the health care stage.

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