



Canadian Association of
Pharmacy Students and Interns

Entry-Level PharmD Position
Statement
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Introduction

Along with the Association of Faculties of Pharmacy of Canada (AFPC)¹, the Association of Deans of Pharmacy of Canada (ADPC)¹ and the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA)², the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns (CAPSI) is in support of the transition from a bachelor's degree to an Entry Level PharmD (ELPD) program as the standard for pharmacy curricula across the ten Canadian pharmacy programs.

CAPSI recognizes the changing professional environment for pharmacists towards more clinical roles in all practice sites in order to embrace these opportunities. Graduates will be better prepared for practice and may experience improved job satisfaction from a program that provides them with more advanced clinical skills and knowledge. The title of the ELPD also better reflects the rigor of the progressive pharmacy curricula. Finally, with the United States and the province of Quebec having adopted the ELPD as the standard for pharmacy education, nationwide implementation of this strategy would harmonize the curricula across provincial and international borders.

Due to the rate at which provincial governments are expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists, and in response to the increasing needs of patients, CAPSI supports the implementation of ELPD curricula nationwide by 2020.

Background

With the accumulation of evidence demonstrating the benefits of comprehensive patient care, such as the Pharmaceutical Care model proposed by Hepler and Strand³, the pharmacist must be well equipped to undertake a new model of practice. At present, the majority of Canada's pharmacists are entering the workforce with a bachelor's degree founded in either didactic or problem-based learning, with a limited number of post-baccalaureate PharmD programs and residency positions. There is a need for continual change and expansion within Canada's pharmacy programs in order to keep up with the evolving role of the pharmacist.

*Moving Forward: Pharmacy Human Resources for the Future*⁴ and the *Blueprint for Pharmacy* have both made recommendations that current pharmacy undergraduate curricula should be revised in order to incorporate additional experiential training⁵. This additional training should include more experience in primary care settings, such as collaborative practices and community pharmacies that provide enhanced patient care services, interdisciplinary teams, and disease state management⁵. Incorporation of these practical experiences may qualify the existing bachelor's programs for ELPD designation, as they are already credit-heavy curricula⁵.

Several studies have investigated the practice of pharmacists who have been trained in a PharmD program compared to those who have graduated from a bachelor's program. Fjortoft and Lee (1995) published results of a survey of pharmacists practicing in both the community and hospital settings⁶. The authors concluded that PharmD pharmacists were spending significantly more time in clinical and educational activities, with less time on prescription processing. The responses portrayed that PharmD pharmacists were more committed to the profession and had higher levels of intrinsic job satisfaction. The *Moving Forward* final report recommended that it be ensured that graduates from Canadian pharmacy programs receive credentials which appropriately reflect the rigor of their curricula, improving pharmacy human resources across the country⁴.



Having acknowledged the need to expand the scope of practice, the pharmacy schools in Quebec and all 52 American states have adopted the ELPD program⁷. *Moving Forward* also recommends facilitating workforce mobility within Canada, which would be improved by harmonizing pharmacy education across the country⁴. This ensures that all pharmacists practicing in all settings in Canada have received the training necessary to practice in all jurisdictions. Furthermore, the report recommends specialization opportunities for pharmacists, which has been one of the outcomes of the transition to ELPD in the United States. In adopting a similar model, graduates from Canadian programs will have a significant number of training opportunities made available to them.

Resolution

The Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns (CAPSI) strongly believes that the education of pharmacy students should be constantly re-evaluated to ensure that graduates are fully equipped for pharmacy practice in all settings. Without diminishing the value of a bachelor's degree in pharmacy, CAPSI supports any modifications to these programs that will promote enhanced patient care and improved clinical skills. These changes would be well supported by the transition to an Entry-Level PharmD (ELPD) program. In addition, CAPSI supports the provision of opportunities for licensed pharmacists to update their skills and knowledge to better align themselves with our ever-changing professional environment. CAPSI supports the goal of implementing these changes in all pharmacy programs in Canada by the year 2020.

References

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3. Hepler CD, Strand L. Opportunities and Responsibilities in Pharmaceutical Care. *Am J Hosp Pharm* 1990; 47(3):533-43.
4. Canadian Pharmacists Association. *Moving Forward: Pharmacy Human Resources for the Future Final Report*. September 2008 <http://blueprintforpharmacy.ca/docs/default-document-library/2011/04/19/Moving%20Forward%20Final%20Report.pdf?Status=Master>
5. Canadian Pharmacists Association. Board Briefing Note: Discussion on Entry-Level PharmD Position Statement. Oct 2008.
6. Fjortoft NF, Lee MWL. Comparison of Activities and Attitudes of Baccalaureate Level and Entry-Level Doctor of Pharmacy Graduates of the University of Illinois at Chicago. *Ann Pharmacother* 1995; 29(10):977-82.
7. Canadian Pharmacists Association. CPhA Position Statement on a Doctor of Pharmacy Degree as an Entry-Level to Practice. Revised October 2011. <http://www.pharmacists.ca/cpha-ca/assets/File/cpha-on-the-issues/PPDoctorOfPharmacyEN.pdf>