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RETIRED

Seamless Care: Statement

THE CANADIAN SOCIETY OF HOSPITAL PHARMACISTS AND THE CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION AND PROVISION OF SEAMLESS CARE SERVICES.

PREPARED BY THE SEAMLESS CARE TASK FORCE OF THE CANADIAN SOCIETY OF HOSPITAL PHARMACISTS (CSHP) AND THE CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION (CPHA).

Seamless care is “the desirable continuity of care delivered to a patient in the health care system across the spectrum of caregivers and their environments. Pharmaceutical care is carried out without interruption such that when one pharmacist ceases to be responsible for the patient’s care, another pharmacist or health care professional accepts responsibility for the patient’s care.”¹ Through seamless care, health care practitioners endeavour to optimize patient outcomes by eliminating the information gaps that may exist when patients are transferred from one site of care to another. This concept is graphically represented in this figure:

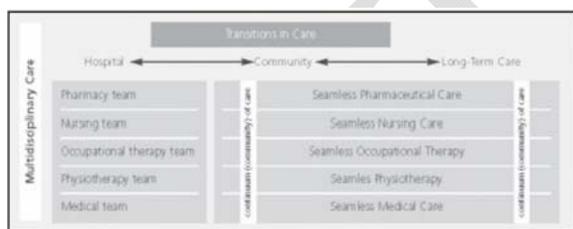


Figure courtesy of Dr. Neil MacKinnon²

Current Canadian health care resources are limited and the duration of hospital stays is decreasing. Patients are being discharged to their homes or alternate care facilities sooner and in less stable condition than in the past. The Canadian population is aging, receiving more expensive prescription medications, and being maintained on more complex drug regimens. The pharmaceutical industry is also developing more customized drug therapies that require special administration techniques in alternate settings. When moving between sites of

care, patients’ drug-related information is not always transferred to all care providers in a timely fashion, which results in fragmented patient profiles. With this complexity of patient care, health care professionals often provide care for patients without access to current and complete information, in particular drug-related information. Consequently, the patient may not receive the most appropriate therapeutic regimen for their condition and circumstances. Such a patient is at risk to experience drug-related problems that may result in subtherapeutic response, or to develop preventable drug-related morbidity. These risks may be especially high for patients who are taking multiple non-prescription and prescription medications and possibly natural health products or food supplements. Drug-related problems can impede the patient’s ability to achieve desired therapeutic outcomes and quality of life. They may also result in an economic burden to the patient, their family and the health care system. Furthermore, there is evidence of the impact on patient safety of the lack of communication between health care providers at different sites of care.³ All of these factors support the need for improved efforts for seamless care provision across professional disciplines.

In an attempt to facilitate continuity of patient information, many pharmacists and other health care providers are implementing seamless care initiatives and services. Timely and accurate transfer of information requires that documentation systems be established, standardized and used consistently within each site of care. Documentation may be electronic or manual, using standardized, easy to use forms within a stable infrastructure to facilitate the access and movement of patient information; furthermore, security and patient confidentiality must be maintained. Methods of documentation should be accessible, secure, and meet the needs of

CSHP Mission:

CSHP is the national voice of pharmacists committed to the advancement of safe, effective medication use and patient care in hospitals and related healthcare settings.



all who use them. Technological advances, including hand-held computers/devices, electronic patient records, electronic patient health cards, and data encryption/decryption software may shape the future of data management and information transfer and thus facilitate continuity of care.

Traditionally, seamless care initiatives have focused on the patient's transfer from the acute care setting back to the community. However, a truly seamless network of communication ensures that information flows among all sites of care. For example, community counterparts can provide health care providers in acute care settings with valuable information regarding a patient's past medication use, medication compliance and use of non-prescription medications. Furthermore, providers working in continuing care facilities, home care services and other areas of health care should be completely integrated into a seamless care network.

Seamless care requires health care professionals and other stakeholders to work in an interdisciplinary fashion to optimize health care. It may serve to narrow gaps that have evolved in the Canadian health care system, which is often stretched to capacity. As a team, health care providers must continue to educate the public, policy makers, government and other professionals of the benefits of seamless care to the patient and to the health care system overall. In addition, research and publication of findings in this area can generate awareness and can offer justification for these services.

The Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists and the Canadian Pharmacists Association support pharmacists in their role of identifying a patient's drug-related problems and communicating these, and other pertinent patient and medication-related information, to all members of the health care team, while maintaining appropriate patient confidentiality and compliance with the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA).

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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