

CE COORDINATORS:

AT THE HEART OF LIFELONG LEARNING



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CONTINUING EDUCATION COORDINATORS PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN LIFELONG LEARNING

By Stuart Foxman

She has been a pharmacist for almost 20 years, but Karen Riley knows that the job, fundamentally, is about being a teacher and learner.

"That's what will take pharmacy to a whole new level, and push the profession forward," she says.

It's why Riley is so proud to be a Regional Continuing Education (CE) Coordinator for the Ontario College of Pharmacists. In the volunteer role, members of the College work to



Karen Riley

identify the CE needs of local pharmacists in their region (in Riley's case, Region 29, Sarnia), and organize live CE seminars and events.

"I wanted to give back to the College in some way, and lifelong learning is such an important component of what we do," says Riley.

What motivates the CE Coordinators, and what do they get out of the experience?

To Riley – Clinical Pharmacy Manager of Education and Quality at Windsor Regional Hospital and Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital – taking on the role was just a logical extension.

So much of the profession, she notes, is about sharing information and raising awareness with others (whether patients, clients or colleagues) regarding health care practices and issues. Riley is also a teacher in a more formal sense, as an adjunct professor of pharmacy students at Wayne State University in Detroit, and at the University of Florida (via distance learning).

It has always been just as important for Riley to be a learner herself. She earned a Doctorate of Pharmacy in 2002, almost 20 years into her career, and has taken countless CE courses over the years.

"Everything I do," says Riley, "revolves around education."

That's the essence of the profession, and what keeps it forever interesting too, says Perveen Gulati, a pharmacist at the Shoppers Drug Mart in Blackburn Hamlet in Ottawa, and a CE Coordinator for Region 1, Ottawa.

"Pharmacy is such a dynamic profession, so CE is crucial," says Gulati. "There's always something to learn, always something new, and you have a responsibility to keep up. You're never done."

That's a huge part of what's appealing about the profession to Gulati; providing those learning opportunities for others is also what has drawn her to the CE Coordinator role.



Perveen Gulati

But the rewards are even more than that. Ing says that as a CE Coordinator, planning and attending the events expands her contacts outside her normal circles, develops her organizational skills, and broadens her knowledge base.

VOLUNTEERS GAIN SATISFACTION, BROADEN OWN KNOWLEDGE

"Continuing Professional Development is absolutely vital for our profession because of the fast pace of change," says Shirin Jetha, the College's Professional Development Advisor, Continuing Competency Programs.

Jetha commends the CE Coordinators for their dedication, but many say that they are the ones who are deeply fulfilled by the opportunity.

"Sometimes, I think I get more out of it than anyone else does," says Gulati. "I love to learn from other people's experiences outside of the retail pharmacy, in hospitals or industry, for instance. When you're organizing events like this, you have the opportunity to sit down with the pharmacy company reps and gain a better understanding of their policies and objectives. This is also a leadership role. So being a CE Coordinator is a great experience for me personally and professionally."

Lilly Ing, who is a CE Coordinator for Region 11, Markham with Danielle Caron, says that she has always viewed CE as something that enables her to practice more effectively, by keeping up with the latest on therapy and guidelines. So the chance to help colleagues reap the same benefits is highly satisfying.

Ing, who works for Shoppers Drug Mart in Markham (a retail location and also in their corporate office), has been a CE Coordinator since 1997. "I never expected to be doing it as long as I have, but I'm always learning as well."

Providing the vehicle to help fellow pharmacists learn is rewarding in itself, says Riley, but she herself has grown in the profession because of her work as a CE Coordinator. "I always learn something that I can put into practice, and hope that other people are feeling the same."

TWO EVENTS A YEAR

CE Coordinators are responsible for planning at least two events a year. The

- Through direct contact with pharmacists in their region, identifying and prioritizing their learning needs.
- Seeking out local specialists to provide education for your members, or working with CE Coordinators from other regions to provide leads for topics and speakers.
- Organizing presentations.

Photo by DW Dorsten



Lilly Ing

For her part, Gulati appreciates the opportunity to take on a role that extends the impact of her day-to-day work as a retail pharmacist.

"Bringing quality events to peers," says Gulati, "makes you feel good that you've had an impact on their capacity to provide

The time involved can vary, around 10 hours per program, plus one full-day meeting per year to network with other CE Coordinators.

The CE Coordinators agree that the experience is among their most gratifying professionally. Riley says that her attitude as a university instructor and as a CE Coordinator is similar: "If you can touch the lives of someone and make them better as a health care professional, push them to their level of maximum achievement, that's really important. That's my drive."



Danielle Caron

better patient care in the future – that you've had an impact on the profession as a whole."

Visit www.ocpinfo.com for a complete listing of upcoming CE events and the regional CE Coordinators. If you're interested in becoming a CE Coordinator, please contact Rahila Ovais at rovais@ocpinfo.com. 