

# New Online Learning Modules Help Pharmacists Practise to Their Full Scope

Shortly after the Ontario government announced new regulations expanding the scope of practice for pharmacy, the College and the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Toronto established a program to support pharmacists practicing to their new scope. The program, now in its third year, is part of a five year research initiative by the university and is supported and funded by OCP.

The program – called Optimizing Patient Care – started with a variety of research initiatives, designed to identify barriers to pharmacists embracing their new expanded scope responsibilities. Some of the research findings were addressed during the [OCP district meeting](#) last year.

The research suggested a need to enhance the resources available to pharmacy professionals to help them address key knowledge gaps. As a result, the university began developing new learning modules, which cover topics such as documentation and clinical decision-making.

Dr. Jamie Kellar, a Pharmacy Clinician Educator with the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, is the education lead for this program and is heading the development and implementation of the learning modules.

The first three modules are now published, with six more in the production or planning stages. Dr. Kellar notes that they will be instrumental in helping pharmacists and pharmacy technicians break through key barriers they're facing or may encounter, optimize the care they provide to patients, and practise to their full scope. The videos will also give practitioners practical tips and ideas on how to rethink and reflect on their own practice.

With the profession of pharmacy changing and pharmacists assuming greater responsibility, practitioners need to adapt to these changes accordingly.

Dr. Zubin Austin, the research lead for this program and the Murray B. Koffler Chair in Pharmacy Management at the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, has studied and written about this topic extensively. In particular, the role pharmacists play, how they see themselves, barriers to practice change, and important personality traits needed for today's pharmacist to excel in their profession.

In the [Summer 2014 issue](#) of *Pharmacy Connection*, Dr. Austin discussed key obstacles that may be preventing pharmacists from practising to their full scope and suggested that an understanding of personality traits and thought processes are essential. Through interviews with pharmacists, Dr. Austin and his team discovered common themes holding practitioners back from developing greater responsibility and confidence.

Dr. Austin and Dr. Kellar worked closely together to ensure the educational videos produced as part of this program address many of the barriers Dr. Austin discovered during his research.

"Through a combination of online surveys, focus groups and interviews, the perspectives and experiences of pharmacists were used as a foundation for understanding learning needs and designing educational modules to address these needs in an effective and enjoyable way," said Dr. Austin.

The videos are about 15-20 minutes each, and are informative and interesting – not just because they're filled with valuable and highly relevant



insights – but because they portray real life scenarios or “What would you do?” cases and the steps a practitioner could take to address them.

Practising pharmacists are featured in the modules, providing the introduction and conclusion, key learning lessons and takeaways, and acting out simulated, real-life practice scenarios. Professional actors from the University of Toronto’s Standardized Patient Program play the role of the patients. These actors are highly trained in accurately depicting the personal history, physical symptoms, emotions, and everyday concerns of an actual patient.

The first video, *A Difference of Opinion – Managing Issues Due to Expanded Scope*, focuses on how pharmacists can confidently make clinical decisions. The video examines how and why a difference in clinical opinion is not an error, navigating the “grey” of the pharmacy world, how to make clinical choices that are in the best interest of the patient, and the development of strategies to reduce the risk of errors when providing expanded services.

The second video, *Clinical Decision Making*, starts with an overview of Clinical Decision Making in Pharmacy Practice, and then transitions into the factors that impact clinical decision making, the responsibilities involved in direct patient care, key steps in the patient care process, and more.

The final video being released at the end of May, *Documentation in the World of Expanded Scope*, gives pharmacists insights into effective documentation in daily practice, why it’s crucial to document decision making, including rationale, and how to

properly use strategies to routinely integrate documentation.

The next three videos are expected to be available in September 2015 and the remaining three in January 2016. They will cover topics such as managing workflow, successfully dealing with physicians, handling relationships with patients, communications, and patient assessment.

The modules are available to all practitioners and can be accessed through the [Continuing Education section](#) of the College’s website. Each video is accompanied with a

short description and useful resources.

The videos will be leveraged in a variety of other ways, too. OCP’s practice advisors may recommend certain modules to pharmacists identified during practice assessment who could benefit from the learning material. The modules will also be referenced in publications, guides, and other materials produced by the university and OCP.

Since ongoing professional development is crucial to maintaining competence, the videos are particularly important with assisting pharmacy professionals in navigating the changing landscape in pharmacy practice today.

The program is very much in-line with OCP’s vision to “Lead the advancement of pharmacy to optimize health and wellness through patient-centered care.”

The videos promote continued competency among pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and help practitioners better utilize their knowledge, skills and abilities, ultimately benefiting their patients and their working relationships with other members of the healthcare team. They also provide pharmacy professionals with the tools needed to flourish in their role (including the mindset they need to adopt) and practise to the standards of the day.

Both the university and OCP are confident that this program will be tremendously valuable to practitioners for many years to come, helping make a bigger impact in the care they deliver to patients. 