

THE APOTHECARY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2025



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The official newsletter of the College of Pharmacy of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Registered pharmacy professionals are responsible for reviewing all information within this publication.



MESSAGE FROM THE REGISTRAR

In June, we were pleased to publish *The Impact of Pharmacy Professionals' Wellness and Working Conditions on Quality and Safety of Patient Care* report as part of CPNL's commitment to determining its role in supporting pharmacy professionals' wellness and influencing working conditions that may impact quality and safety of patient care. For more information on the report, see page 3 of this issue.

Prior to finalizing the report, the study's findings, which included the results of the *Work Environment and Business Practices in NL Pharmacies* survey conducted in Spring 2024, were presented to the CPNL Board of Directors during a full-day workshop held this past April. Upon determining that CPNL does in fact have a role to play regarding these issues, the Board decided on the next steps, which included:

- supporting wellness initiatives;
- collaborating with key partners on staffing initiatives and workforce growth; and
- collaborating with key partners to address business pressures.

According to the findings of the report, inadequate staffing is a prevalent issue across the province. CPNL will be increasing our engagement with key partners regarding workforce growth initiatives. Our goal is to support increased retention of new pharmacist and pharmacy technician graduates and increased recruitment of internationally educated pharmacy professionals to our province's workforce. As a result, there will be an increased need for preceptors to take on pharmacy interns and pharmacy technician interns for practical training. As practical training is a critical component of entry-to-practice requirements, the support of pharmacy professionals through precepting students is necessary for workforce growth. While we understand workload pressures may make this challenging, the only way to alleviate workload is to increase the number of pharmacy professionals and enable their contributions towards patient care.

Having once been students and interns ourselves, we know the importance of having a dedicated preceptor help guide and support us as we prepared to enter the pharmacy profession. Serving as a preceptor allows you to pay it forward to the next generation of pharmacy professionals and give back to the profession by sharing your knowledge and skills. Furthermore, as students progress through their learning journey and gain experience in pharmacies, they can provide greater assistance to pharmacy teams, which helps with workload and staffing shortages. Students and interns often bring new ideas and fresh perspectives, resulting in learning opportunities for pharmacy staff, creative ways to provide high quality care, and positivity in the workplace. They are an important part of pharmacy teams.

I encourage all registered pharmacy professionals to consider taking on this valuable role and for all pharmacy owners and managers to support mentorship opportunities. To learn more about the benefits of serving as a preceptor, check out the *Serve as a Preceptor—Shape the Next Generation of the Profession* article on page 5 of this issue, which includes interviews with past and current preceptors. I would like to thank all the registered pharmacy professionals who took the time to share their experiences for this article.

Whether it is for the purposes of research or development of standards and policies, we love engaging with you on issues and topics relevant to the profession and patient care. As we continue our commitment to consultation and collaboration, please keep an eye out for future opportunities to share your insights with CPNL.

I wish you all a wonderful summer,

Noelle Patten



THE IMPACT OF PHARMACY PROFESSIONALS' WELLNESS AND WORKING CONDITIONS ON QUALITY AND SAFETY OF PATIENT CARE REPORT

With growing concerns amongst regulators and pharmacy professionals in Canada about the influence of work environments and business practices on pharmacy professionals' well-being and quality and safety of patient care, the College of Pharmacy of Newfoundland and Labrador (CPNL) decided to investigate these concerns further and committed to determining its role in this issue as part of its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

Anecdotally, CPNL has heard concerns about poor work environments, such as understaffing and inadequate breaks, throughout the province's pharmacies leading to higher levels of poor well-being amongst pharmacy professionals. In addition, concerns have been raised over business practices, such as quotas or time limits for clinical services, that negatively impact pharmacy practice by prioritizing business interests over quality of patient care. These concerns have been shared with CPNL through past consultations, including the strategic planning survey and focus groups conducted in 2022 and the safety attitudes questionnaire conducted in 2023, during pharmacy site visits, and through general comments forwarded to the CPNL staff and board members.

To gain more insight regarding the concerns being raised, CPNL developed a survey based on similar surveys distributed by pharmacy regulatory authorities in other provinces across Canada, including the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP), the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals (SCPP), and the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia (CPBC). The survey, entitled *Work Environment and Business Practices in NL Pharmacies*, included questions related to breaks and hours worked, staffing, resources and infrastructure, workplace culture, and business practices, as well as professional well-being and aspects of patient care quality. The survey was open from May 6 to June 3, 2024, and distributed to all active registered pharmacy professionals, which included up to 1,289 pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy students, and pharmacy interns at that time.



The responses to the *Work Environment and Business Practices in NL Pharmacies* survey have been analyzed alongside responses to relevant questions in the strategic plan consultation and safety attitudes questionnaire, and a literature review related to pharmacy professionals' work environments, well-being, and pharmacy business practices. The findings have been published in CPNL's *The Impact of Pharmacy Professionals' Wellness and Working Conditions on Quality and Safety of Patient Care* report.

The report includes an overview of the working conditions in NL pharmacies and the prevalence of stress and burnout amongst pharmacy professionals. The analysis establishes that there is an association between workplace conditions, pharmacy professionals' well-being, and patient care quality, and it is CPNL's position that it has a role to play in addressing these concerns as part of its responsibility to public protection.

The key findings of the analysis are outlined on the next page. The full report is available for download on the CPNL website at: <https://cpnl.ca/the-impact-of-pharmacy-professionals-wellness-and-working-conditions-on-quality-and-safety-of-patient-care/>.

THE IMPACT OF PHARMACY PROFESSIONALS' WELLNESS AND WORKING CONDITIONS ON QUALITY AND SAFETY OF PATIENT CARE REPORT

KEY FINDINGS

1. Pharmacy Professionals are Stressed

The prevalence of stress amongst pharmacy professionals is of significant concern, with 82% of respondents reporting experiencing stress due to their current work environment and 75% reporting experiencing burnout or at risk for burnout. As both the survey results and literature review identified an association between poorer well-being of pharmacy professionals and negative responses to patient care quality indicators, the potential impacts on the quality and safety of patient care need to be explored further.

2. Pharmacies have Inadequate Staffing

Among survey respondents, 82% reported that their pharmacy had a staff shortage, including shortages of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and pharmacy assistants. More than half of respondents indicated that they believe the staff shortage is due to being unable to recruit qualified staff, while others believe their pharmacy is not willing to hire more staff. Some respondents felt that insufficient staffing complements may affect their ability to practice safely and deliver quality patient care, practice to professional standards, and provide current clinical pharmacy services, which raises concerns about the potential negative impacts to the quality and safety of patient care.

3. Pharmacy Professionals are Experiencing Business Pressures

Many pharmacy professionals reported feeling directed or pressured to complete activities in a limited timeframe or achieve certain number or dollar amount targets for pharmacy services either at their current practice site or in a previous workplace. It is not clear from the survey results whether time pressures are primarily caused by inadequate staffing or limits imposed by employers. Regardless of the reason, having insufficient time to complete specific tasks can compromise the quality of the service being provided to the patient.

4. Patient Care Quality is at Risk of Being Compromised

With 81% of respondents indicating that they have had to turn away or chose not to provide a professional service to a patient due to staffing or time constraints, the potential impact on access to care is concerning. This is further reinforced by respondents indicating that their pharmacy does not have a sufficient staffing complement to provide current clinical pharmacy services. Additionally, 40% of respondents do not agree that their staffing complement is sufficient to practice safely and deliver quality patient care.



SERVE AS A PRECEPTOR — SHAPE THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE PROFESSION

Recent findings published in CPNL's *The Impact of Pharmacy Professionals' Wellness and Working Conditions on Quality and Safety of Patient Care Report* indicate that Newfoundland and Labrador is experiencing a significant shortage in pharmacy professionals. This shortage serves to highlight the critical role that preceptors play in preparing students and interns to enter the profession, whether it be training new graduates or international pharmacy professionals.

A preceptor is an experienced pharmacist or pharmacy technician who assumes responsibility for the activities of their assigned student or intern during their time in the pharmacy and commits to evaluating their performance during the practical training period. This evaluation is critical to ensuring competence of future members of the profession.

PRECEPTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Practical training is a requirement for pharmacy and pharmacy technician interns to gain valuable experience in a pharmacy setting and apply their education in a real-world environment. Under CPNL's practical training programs, preceptors are expected to ensure that:

- adequate oversight and supervision are provided to the intern, personally supervising them at least 50% of the intern's time at the practice site;
- activities in the Practical Training Manual are completed and documented appropriately;
- accurate appraisal of the intern's competence to perform duties and responsibilities of a pharmacist or pharmacy technician; and
- evaluation of the intern's performance is honest, open, candid, and unbiased.

Once the intern has completed the practical training period, the preceptor is responsible for completing an evaluation form and submitting it to CPNL.

While a pharmacist or pharmacy technician who serves as a preceptor should expect to give the position an appropriate amount of attention, and this time commitment can sometimes deter a pharmacy professional from serving as a preceptor, it should be noted that there are benefits that can be gained from the experience as well.

To help demonstrate this, CPNL recently asked several pharmacy professionals to share their experiences including what they see as the benefits of serving as a preceptor to students and interns.

BENEFITS OF SERVING AS A PRECEPTOR

1. GROWING THE PHARMACY PROFESSION

Preceptors have a crucial role to play in the education and training of pharmacy professionals. Jason Ryan, Chair of the CPNL Board of Directors, who has served as a preceptor to students and interns completing both community pharmacy and hospital pharmacy rotations, says that "'real world' experience is required to teach students how to apply the knowledge they have obtained in a meaningful manner."



Esther Pippy
Clinical Pharmacist
Internal Medicine
NL Health Services

“ [Students] get firsthand working experience in your service, which can help with recruitment and training.... ”

Preceptors facilitate a smooth transition from the classroom to the pharmacy. Once the trained intern begins working as a pharmacist or pharmacy technician, they are already comfortable in the work environment and proficient integrating into the workflow, relieving some of the burden on existing pharmacy staff.

Having quality preceptors at your pharmacy can be an important recruiting tool, with many students and interns going on to work at the practice site once they have become registered



SERVE AS A PRECEPTOR — SHAPE THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE PROFESSION

as a pharmacist or pharmacy technician. Esther Pippy, a hospital pharmacist who has served as a preceptor for many years, agrees, saying “it enables students to get firsthand working experience in your service, which can help with both recruitment and training if they enjoy their placement.”

2. ENHANCING YOUR PRACTICE



Maria Piercey
Clinical Pharmacist
Harm Reduction Clinic
NL Health Services

“Being a preceptor keeps you on your toes, students ask tough questions.”

Although practical training is designed to be a learning experience for the intern, it can also be a valuable learning opportunity for the preceptor. Whether it is finding answers to interns’ questions or learning about new approaches to areas of practice from the intern themselves, there are many opportunities for the preceptor to enhance their practice knowledge.

“Being a preceptor keeps you on your toes, students ask tough questions,” says Maria Piercey, a hospital pharmacist who has served as a preceptor for the last ten years. “It challenges me to stay current and brings new opportunities to think critically and learn about new topics.”

Maria takes advantage of having a student or intern on staff by having them host information sessions for the pharmacy team, participate in provincial education days, or develop educational material that is used daily by the pharmacy team when making clinical decisions.

Parag Jani, a community pharmacist who has served as a preceptor more than 10 times, also feels that serving as a preceptor offers a great opportunity for knowledge sharing, “I find I often learn as much from the students as they do from me.”



Parag Jani
Pharmacist
Hillcrest Pharmasave

“I find I often learn as much from the students as they do from me.”

3. DEVELOPING YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Serving as a preceptor is also a great way to develop managerial and leadership skills as preceptors take on the responsibility of educating, guiding, and supporting their students or interns.

Speaking of balancing her responsibilities as a pharmacist and as a preceptor, Esther says, “it requires organization, effective prioritization of workload, and good time management skills.” Esther feels that her skills in these areas have improved since becoming a preceptor.

4. ADDITIONAL STAFF SUPPORT



Emily Nolan
Pharmacist
Shoppers Drug Mart

“[Students] are quick and eager learners and catch on to the workflow almost immediately.”

With staff shortages in pharmacies across the province, having a student or intern on staff offers an extra set of hands to the pharmacy team.

Emily Nolan, a community pharmacist who has served as a preceptor for several students or interns over the last five years, appreciates the extra help. “Regardless of the year the student is in, they are always helpful to have around,” she says. “They are quick and eager learners and catch on to the workflow almost immediately.”

Having a student or intern on staff can enable the pharmacy to increase the volume of services provided or allow staff time to work on additional projects. This is the case in Parag’s pharmacy.



SERVE AS A PRECEPTOR — SHAPE THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE PROFESSION

“We are able to take on extra projects and health promotion activities we may not have been able to engage in with normal staffing,” he says. He also noticed that with the help of students or interns the pharmacy completes more blood pressure checks during May Measure Month, does more off-site vaccine clinics, and completes more medication reviews.

5. BUILD LONG-TERM PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Pharmacy professionals who serve as preceptors have the opportunity to build lasting relationships with their students and interns who go on to become their colleagues. These strong professional bonds can benefit both the professionals and their patients.

Emily appreciates this opportunity to develop both lifelong friendships and foster intraprofessional relationships. “I’ve relied on these connections several times to help patients navigate different parts of their healthcare journey,” she says, “and it results in a positive and more seamless experience.”

TIPS FOR MANAGING PRECEPTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Even with the many benefits of serving as a preceptor, taking on additional responsibilities can be difficult for already busy pharmacy professionals to manage. However, creating a work plan can alleviate some of these challenges and allow preceptors to take advantage of the benefits of taking on the role.

Here are some tips from past preceptors for balancing the responsibilities as a preceptor with the responsibilities of their practice:

- Set up a plan at the beginning of the placement to ensure that both the preceptor and student or intern know what activities are expected to be completed and to help keep on top of required tasks.
- Schedule a weekly touchpoint with the student or intern to discuss the projects they are involved in and provide feedback on their progress.
- Have the student or intern shadow you to provide support to you in completing your tasks.
- Have other members of your pharmacy team contribute to the student’s or intern’s training by demonstrating some of their roles within the pharmacy workflow.
- If you work in a collaborative environment with other healthcare professionals, have the student or intern shadow them as they complete specific tasks, like working in a clinic or going on a home visit.

As self-regulated professionals, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians have a vested interest in ensuring the standards and integrity of the profession are upheld by those entering the profession. Serving as a preceptor will give you an active role in developing the future of the profession. Maria agrees, saying “serving as a preceptor allows us to model best practices for our future colleagues, ensuring safer and more competent practice.” As past students and interns, you know the value of having a dedicated preceptor, and we encourage you to “pay it forward” by serving as a preceptor for the next generation of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.



Jason Ryan

Chair, CPNL &
Pharmacist, Bonavista Pharmacy

“ I think we all have a role in shaping our future professionals. ”



LESSONS LEARNED — MEDICATION INCIDENT

CPNL recently received information from a pharmacy professional and a member of the public about a medication incident that took place in a community pharmacy after a hospital discharge. We are sharing the analysis of this incident with you to emphasize the insights that can be gained from such occurrences and potential quality improvements that may prevent others from experiencing similar incidents.

CASE

A discharge prescription that included 10 medications, one of which was clopidogrel, was sent via fax to a community pharmacy from the hospital. The pharmacy processed the prescription and entered it in the patient's file; however, only 9 of the 10 medications were entered, with clopidogrel being inadvertently omitted.

The medications that were entered were subsequently clinically verified and packaged. Following this, the prescriptions underwent package validation. The patient's representative came to the pharmacy to collect the medications and was offered counseling, which they declined. Later that day, pharmacy staff attempted to contact the patient by phone to provide counseling but were unable to reach them.

Several weeks later, the patient was readmitted to the hospital due to a medical event. During the medication reconciliation process, it was found that the patient had not been taking the clopidogrel that had been prescribed upon discharge. Further investigation determined that clopidogrel had been mistakenly omitted from the discharge prescription during dispensing.

INCIDENT HANDLING AT PHARMACY

The pharmacy involved handled the discovery and investigation of the medication incident in accordance with CPNL's [Standards of Practice – Continuous Quality Improvement and Medication Incident Reporting](#), Section 3:

- The patient's caregiver was contacted to provide notification that a medication error had occurred and to apologize for the incident. Since the patient was hospitalized, their care team was informed of the incident.
- The medication incident was reported anonymously to the National Incident Data Repository (NIDR) through the pharmacy's reporting platform.
- The incident was recorded locally within the pharmacy, and a meeting was convened with the pharmacy staff to review the incident, identify any contributing factors, and explore strategies to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY THE PHARMACY TEAM

- **Lack of systematic processes for medication reconciliation:** The pharmacy's workflow for checking prescriptions did not set up a clear step for medication reconciliation, including checking new prescriptions against patients' medication profiles to flag any changes, and checking prepared medications against the original prescription to ensure all prescribed medications are either prepared or logged onto the patient's profile.
- **Clinical verification processes:** When performing clinical verification, the workflow set up in the pharmacy's practice management system leads pharmacists to focus on ensuring each individual medication is therapeutically appropriate, instead of looking at the entirety of the prescription, making omission errors difficult to detect.
- **Lack of patient counselling:** Patient counselling was offered to the patient's agent, but the offer was declined. If patient counselling had occurred, it may have been detected that the patient had been started on a new medication, clopidogrel, while admitted to hospital.



LESSONS LEARNED — MEDICATION INCIDENT

PREVENTING RECURRENCES

As a result of their investigation into this medication incident, the pharmacy involved identified multiple strategies aimed at preventing similar errors from occurring in the future. For example:

- Upon presentation of a hospital discharge prescription, a pharmacist will conduct a comprehensive medication reconciliation prior to the prescription being entered on the patient's file. This process will be documented on the patient's file.
- The pharmacy team member performing package validation will count the number of prescribed medications on the discharge summary and verify that the number prescribed equals the number of medications being dispensed.
- The importance of counselling will be reiterated to the patient and/or their agent, and notes will be placed on the patient's file to alert pharmacy staff that a pharmacist needs to speak with them at their next visit, especially if initial attempts to provide counselling are unsuccessful.

Additionally, the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) offers guidance to facilitate a secure transition of care for patients being released from the hospital. They emphasize the significance of medication reconciliation during care transitions. Medication reconciliation allows pharmacists to identify any medications that have been discontinued, alterations to existing medications, or new medications that may have been prescribed for the patient while in the hospital. Comprehensive medication reconciliation is essential for maintaining continuity of care and can assist in addressing any medication discrepancies. Additional suggestions for preventing medication incidents associated with hospital discharge prescriptions include:

- Limit the use of the copy function during order entry. For each new prescription, a new entry should be created and the old entry deactivated (for example, if a dose has changed). The copy function should only be used for new prescriptions that are unchanged from the previous prescription on the patient's profile.
- If the patient receives blister or compliance packs, prepare or re-pack medications whenever possible to incorporate medication changes rather than dispensing the new medications in vials until the next scheduled cycle.
- Upon receipt of a new prescription, ask the patient or their agent if they are expecting any changes to their prescribed medication prior to processing the prescription.
- Conduct independent double checks whenever possible in various stages of the pharmacy workflow.

While the recommendations above focus on hospital discharges and transitions of care, they are relevant to the assessment and processing of any new prescriptions.

2025
Annual
General
Meeting

July 25, 2025
3:00 PM



2024
ANNUAL
REPORT



BOARD MEETING UPDATE

Since the last issue of *The Apothecary*, the CPNL Board of Directors (Board) met on April 10-11 and June 10, 2025.

During these meetings, the Board:

- Received an update on operations, progress with strategic goals and initiatives, and financial management from the Registrar & CEO.
- Provided direction to address issues related to pharmacy professionals' wellness and working conditions, and related impacts on patient care.
- Reviewed an updated governance manual and approved two new governance policies— Board Members' Code of Conduct and Meeting Procedure Guidelines.
- Discussed work with the Department of Health and Community Services and NL Health Services to enable pharmacists to order laboratory tests, and reviewed draft revisions to the *Pharmacy Regulations, 2024*.

DEVELOPING A NEW CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE PHARMACY PROFESSION

CPNL is embarking on the creation of a new Code of Ethics for pharmacy professionals in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are excited to share some details about this important piece of work with you and hope that you will assist us in ensuring the profession has a code of ethics that meets the evolving needs of patients and society, and that can be readily interpreted and applied by pharmacy professionals.

A code of ethics is core for any profession. Professional codes of ethics recognise that professionals have specialised knowledge, skill, attitudes, and competencies that can have a significant impact on the people they serve. A code of ethics establishes the profession's foundational obligations to the public and must be used by professionals to guide all their professional activities and decision-making. It also guides CPNL's key partners and interested parties in understanding regulatory guidance and decisions related to pharmacy practice, particularly reported ethical dilemmas or conflicts.

The current [CPNL Code of Ethics](#) was established in 2014 and had minor revisions in 2021. As societies and professions evolve over time, it is important to ensure that the CPNL Code of Ethics reflects the current needs of the public and scope of pharmacy practice. Our Code of Ethics review will consider current ethics-based research alongside pharmacy-specific elements pertaining to scope expansion, health emergencies, technology advances, conflict of interest, professional autonomy, and new legislation as well as other relevant issues.

The tentative completion date for this work is Spring 2026. The needs assessment phase is underway to set direction for drafting the new Code of Ethics and early user insight is critical to this phase. As such, there will be engagement opportunities for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in August of this year. To prepare for this consultation, we encourage you to review the current CPNL Code of Ethics and consider the following:

- What are your ideas for content and design for a new Code?
- How can a new Code optimize its use and relevance in your practice?

Keep an eye out in CPNL's communications for information on participating in the creation of this new Code of Ethics.

Once a new draft of the Code of Ethics is prepared, wide key partner engagement opportunities will be provided in the winter of 2026.



BOARD MEMBERS

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Jason Ryan

VICE CHAIR

Shawn Bugden

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Mark Sheppard

Andrew Sweetapple

PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES

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Terry Foss

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GOVERNMENT-APPOINTED

Mary O'Brien

Currently Vacant

NON-VOTING

REGISTRAR

Noelle Patten

ELECTED MEMBERS

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Stephen Coombs

ZONE 2 PHARMACIST

Jason Ryan

ZONE 3 PHARMACIST

Jennifer Godsell (*on leave*)

ZONE 4 PHARMACIST

Bree Aucoin

ZONE 5 HOSPITAL PHARMACIST

Justin Peddle

ZONE 6 PHARMACY TECHNICIAN

Jeanie Hinks

ZONE 7 AT-LARGE PHARMACISTS

Keith Bailey

Andrew Sweetapple

DEAN, MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

Shawn Bugden



The official newsletter of
the College of Pharmacy of
Newfoundland and Labrador.

Registered pharmacy
professionals are responsible
for reviewing all information
within this publication.

CPNL OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

<div> <div><u>Address</u></div> <div>Suite 201 145 Kelsey Drive St. John's, NL A1B 0L2</div> </div> <div> <div><u>Phone/Fax</u></div> <div>Phone: 709-753-5877 Toll-Free: 877-453-5877 Fax: 709-753-8615</div> </div>	
General Information	inforx@cpnl.ca
Registration	registration@cpnl.ca
Pharmacy Licensing	licensing@cpnl.ca
Quality Assurance	QA@cpnl.ca
Pharmacy Practice	practicequestions@cpnl.ca
Complaints & Discipline	complaints@cpnl.ca
Communications	communications@cpnl.ca

CPNL Staff

Noelle Patten Registrar & CEO	npatten@cpnl.ca
Gayle Johnson Office Administrator & Executive Assistant	gjohnson@cpnl.ca
Julie Reddy Director of Communications	jreddy@cpnl.ca
Melanie Healey Deputy Registrar/Director of Practice & Registration	mhealey@cpnl.ca
Aileen O'Keefe Registration & Pharmacy Licensing Administrator	aokeefe@cpnl.ca
Beth McGrath Interim Director of Quality & Pharmacy Licensing	bmcgrath@cpnl.ca
Rheya White Community Pharmacy Practice Consultant	rwhite@cpnl.ca
Norman Lace Hospital Pharmacy Practice Consultant	nlace@cpnl.ca
Natalie Payne General Counsel/Director of Complaints & Discipline	npayne@cpnl.ca
Michele Bowes Complaints & Discipline Coordinator	mbowes@cpnl.ca

