Pharmacist working conditions

I APPLAUD THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS for supporting an examination of pharmacist working conditions.¹ This issue has been swept under the table for far too long, and it isn't surprising to see that this study suggests that almost a third of pharmacists feel they are practising in an unsafe work environment. Almost 2 years ago, I had to walk away from a job that I really liked and patients I cared about because the practice environment was changed by corporate direction that took away pharmacist breaks and pharmacist overlap and affected patient safety. The absolute nail in my coffin was impacts to patient safety. My patients trusted me, and there was no way I could stay on when the organization I was working for made my work environment less safe for them. Pharmacists ensure patient safety and should not be influenced by the proprietor, but we are being forced to toe the company line or be replaced by international pharmacy graduates who are even more vulnerable to duress than their Canadian-trained counterparts.

It is unacceptable for our profession to allow this to progress any further. Pharmacists need to have the courage to stand up for their professional values. We need to band together and absolutely refuse to allow corporate interests to jeopardize patient safety. Patients expect 100% accuracy from pharmacists, and anything that negatively affects this goal will

eventually hurt a patient. If we are overworked or stressed we make mistakes; the people responsible for others' safety need a safe environment themselves. My fear is that there is going to be a sensational screw up, with a child or another patient getting hurt, and we're all going to say, "I told you so." Before this happens, we must work together with corporate owners; they need to respect our profession and fully understand that ensuring patient safety is not something to toy with. So we all need to report duress from proprietors to our respective colleges and absolutely hold firm to our mandate to ensure patient safety. Document everything (we're good at that), and if you're threatened with wrongful dismissal, raise absolute hell. (It's important to realize that human rights violations need to be reported within 1 year, not 2, as in many other situations.) I, for one, am willing to help you, and I want every pharmacist in Canada to join me. Enough is enough!

—Dean Baayens, BScPharm
Red Deer, Alberta

Reference

1. Tsao NW, Lynd LD, Gastonguay L, et al. Factors associated with pharmacists' perceptions of their working conditions and safety and effectiveness of patient care. *Can Pharm J (Ott)* 2016;149:18-27.