The conference experience— Making it yours

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AFTER A LONG WINTER, SPRING IS FINALLY HERE! Along with the promise of warm weather, blooming flowers and questions about allergy medications, this is also a time for pharmacists to decide whether to sign up for the latest round of pharmacy conferences. As busy practitioners caught up in patient care and the demands of everyday life, it is sometimes difficult to make the commitment to attend a pharmacy conference. But whether you are a student or a new or seasoned practitioner, there is something at the conference for everybody. From professional development to research to networking, here are 4 great ways conferences can leave you inspired and proud to be part of the broader pharmacy community.

1. Develop your knowledge

Get the latest information on innovative practices through interactive discussions with subject matter experts and peer leaders. Whether you are new to the profession or have many years under your belt, conferences can be a place to further develop your knowledge, expand your practice into new areas of patient care and share your own experience by leading professional development sessions.

Practical tip: Make it your goal to incorporate at least one learning into your practice from each session you attend.

2. Share and use evidence that supports your practice

Conferences are often research hubs—places where you can showcase your work, whether you are an academic or working on a small improvement project in your pharmacy. You can also take this time to learn from others and gain valuable insight into how the latest evidence and knowledge translates into your practice.

Practical tip: If you are sharing evidence, try to offer key takeaways that can help pharmacists identify ways to apply the knowledge. If you are learning from evidence, take away at least 2 pearls to incorporate into your practice.

3. Network

As a society, we are increasingly relying on building our virtual networks, checking our phones countless times throughout the day. Although these virtual connections are invaluable, it is important to remember that they should not replace in-person interactions. Conferences are an opportunity to have a few dedicated days for face-to-face conversations with colleagues from across the province or country. They facilitate interpersonal exchanges by bringing us together and are a great place to develop meaningful and inspiring connections. For students and new practitioners, these interactions can help shape your future; for seasoned practitioners, your insight and mentorship can have a lasting and profound impact on the next generation of pharmacists.

Practical tip: Pack plenty of business cards to exchange with people you meet at events.

4. Have fun

Conferences usually include organized social events, which can be a great opportunity to talk with colleagues in a more relaxed environment over a beer or some nachos. As one attendee of the CPhA annual conference said, “It’s a really fun event and an overall great time with excellent speakers and informative sessions.”

Practical tip: Make sure you take advantage of the fun nights and alumni events the conference offers.

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DOI:10.1177/1715163519841015

Conferences provide some of the best opportunities for us to move out of our individual silos of practice and to come together as a community. They serve as an irreplaceable time of rejuvenation and inspiration during which we can push each other to grow and move forward as a profession. Regardless of how long you have been practising pharmacy, you will find value in these experiences. This year, we challenge you to block off some time

in your calendar to attend at least one pharmacy conference to connect with the greater pharmacy community. Find out what inspires you to be the best pharmacist you can be by taking the conference experience and making it yours.

Ready to go? Check out this issue's Cross-Canada Updates for a look at the 2019 conference schedule for your provincial and national pharmacy associations. ■

***Acknowledgment:** Thanks to Christine Dagleish for reviewing this piece.*