

## An Apple for Education: 2009 PTEC National Conference Report

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The Red Lion Hotel at the Park in Spokane, WA, was the perfect setting July 9–11 for the 2009 Pharmacy Technician Educators Council (PTEC) National Conference as members came together with the common purpose of advancing the education and training of pharmacy technicians. Because Washington is known for its delicious apples, “An Apple for Education” was appropriately chosen as this year’s theme. Although attendance was down compared with previous years, due to the economic cutbacks at many educational institutions, educators who were present benefited from the quality presentations and earned valuable continuing education credits as well.

The first session of the conference began on Thursday afternoon with the timely subject, “Teaching Online: Ups and Downs,” presented by Barbara Lacher CPhT BS, Assistant Director and Associate Professor of North Dakota State College of Science, Wahpeton, ND. A thorough discussion covering various distance education platforms, potential technology barriers associated with distance learning, and ways to effectively communicate with the online student provided valuable information for educators who are currently teaching online or who have plans to do so in the future.

Everyone had the opportunity to relax and become reacquainted with other PTEC members and supporters during the welcome reception that was cosponsored by publisher Lippincott Williams & Wilkins and PTEC. This get-together is a favorite event each year for educators new to PTEC, as well as longtime members.

Friday’s full day of sessions began with the annual PTEC Welcome Breakfast, sponsored by the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB). Following breakfast, the first item on the agenda was a unique look at “Accreditation of Pharmacy Technician Training in Canada,” presented by David S Hill EdD FCSHP, Executive Director, Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP), Vancouver, BC, Canada. This discussion focused on the accreditation system for pharmacy technician programs in Canada. It covered the various agency initiatives that contributed to implementation of an accreditation system, the standards and accreditation process currently in place, and the governing structure of the CCAPP.

As expected, Marlene Lamnin RPh, Program Director at Western Career College, San Leandro, CA, gave an insightful and entertaining look at the different viewpoints of the pharmacy technician instructor, the student extern, the experiential site, career services, and American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) requirements. Entitled “Don’t Cut the Cord Yet!: A Multi-Faceted Overview of Externship,” this program also explained how to evaluate the ability of professional staff at experiential sites to teach and train effectively as preceptors.

Lunch on Friday was held in conjunction with the vendor fair. Representatives from publishing companies, manufacturing companies, government agencies, and various organizations demonstrated products and services available to pharmacy technician educators. This occasion, which allows attendees to experience new, in-

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novative, and informative resources, is always a highlight of the conference.

Friday afternoon's program covered issues pertinent to the educator. Vincent Aleccia EdD NBCT, Professor at Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA, presented "Structuring for Success: How to Design an Effective Syllabus." Dr. Aleccia explained that the syllabus has a multipurpose function, being used not only as an informational and motivational tool, but also as a reference that can be consulted throughout the course. The concept of the syllabus as a contract between teacher and student was considered and explored.

Next, Scott Finnie PhD, Professor at Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA, presented a captivating talk on "Diversity in the Workplace." This discussion covered the basic sources of prejudice and discrimination, which include ignorance, fear, myopia, insecurity, and selfishness. The antidotes for this behavior, which consist of education, exposure, immersion, dignity, and sacrifice, were addressed. The pervasive influence of Eurocentrism on society and the workplace was also discussed.

To round out the evening, LiAnne Webster CPhT, Program Administrator with Richland College, Dallas, TX, led an interactive discussion on identifying key soft skills needed to be a successful pharmacy technician. This topic led into winning strategies for making the transition from a staff position to supervisory or management roles. It was noted that optimizing individual strengths and recognizing individual weaknesses aid in this transition.

Saturday began with a prayer breakfast affiliated with the Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International and led by Stanley Lloyd PharmD, Managing Editor of Harvey Whitney Books Company. During the breakfast, guest speaker Danielle Riggs ARNP, Clinical Director of Christ Clinic in Spokane, shared her involvement with the clinic and how its mission is to help the underserved population. A recording of Danielle's talk can be found online at CPFI's Web site ([www.cphi.org](http://www.cphi.org) then click on 'Activities' then 'Meetings').

Melissa Corrigan RPh, Executive Director/CEO of PTCB, Washington, DC, began the morning session with an update on trends in pharmacy technician education and training. "Trained, Tested, and Trusted: A New Frontier for Certified Pharmacy Technicians," covered several aspects of the current conditions and proposed regulations affecting the pharmacy technician. The recent technician initiative by ASHP, which partners with state affiliates to advocate for state laws governing the education, training, and certification of technicians, was a topic of discussion. In addition, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy task force recommendations were carefully considered by PTEC members.

Lisa Lifshin RPh, Manager of Program Services, ASHP, Bethesda, MD, continued the discussion as it related to new developments with the advocacy initiatives.

Lisa is a very popular speaker at the conference and is always generous with her time and experience in answering questions regarding accreditation for pharmacy technician programs. This segment proves to be especially beneficial to our new members, who are seeking accreditation for their programs.

*Student learning outcomes* seems to be the catch phrase in higher education these days, and so the next presentation had everyone's attention. "Assessment: Leveraging Results for Improvement of Learning and Program Accountability," presented by Patrick Barlow PhD, Director of College Assessment at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, gave the audience a comprehensive look at not only identifying learning outcomes, but also knowing how to assess the learning outcomes as they relate to pharmacy technician training.

Members were treated to a wonderful lunch provided by Elsevier Publishing and also received valuable insight into Evolve, an integrated e-learning resource for instructors and students, to be used in conjunction with textbook content and online. The presentation was made by Elsevier representatives Jeni Rose and Allison Wyffels.

The last presentation of the day was given by Becky Rabbitt RPh PharmD, CEO, Institute for the Certification of Pharmacy Technicians (ICPT), St. Louis, MO. Becky's presentation, "Professionalism: Changing Old Behaviors and Defining New Values," discussed the challenges and pressures that can be a barrier to professional behavior. She outlined the behaviors desired in a professional environment and revealed a plan in which students can incorporate skills and values to enhance professionalism.

The general membership meeting was called to order. Several discussion items were on the agenda, including the PTEC treasury report, membership status, professional meetings attended by the PTEC Board members, and an update on the PTEC Web site. Ann Oberg, PTEC Vice President, announced her resignation due to personal issues. Dolores Sewchok was asked to serve out the remainder of Ann's term and accepted the position. The location was announced for next year's conference. It will be held in historic Savannah, GA, home of PTEC's President-Elect, Karen Davis. Plan to be at the beach next July as we "Sail into Savannah: Pharmacy Technicians and Beyond."

The 2009 PTEC Conference concluded on Saturday evening with a lovely banquet sponsored by ICPT and PTEC. The newly elected officers were announced and sworn into office. Officers for the 2009–2010 term include: President, Sandi Tschritter; Past President, Mary Mohr; President-Elect, Karen Davis (Jan Keresztes stood in for Karen, as she was unable to attend the conference); Interim Vice President, Dolores Sewchok; Secretary, Maureen Simmons; Treasurer, Barbara Lacher; and Reporter, Beverly Hawkins. The evening came to a close after all of the door prizes had been presented and the farewells had been exchanged, until next year.