



National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities[®]
Association nationale des organismes de réglementation de la pharmacie

Principles of Professionalism for the Profession of Pharmacy



Principles of Professionalism for the Profession of Pharmacy

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The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities
130 Albert Street, Suite 1800
Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4
Canada

E-mail: info@napra.ca | Telephone: 613-569-9658

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Introduction

What is the intent of this document?

The intent of this document is to define the principles of professionalism that the profession of pharmacy agrees to strive toward and to open the dialogue around professionalism with stakeholders across the profession. This document is the first step in a longer term project to enhance the culture of professionalism in pharmacy. Next steps will include working with stakeholders to identify ways to uphold these principles in each of our respective day-to-day activities.

Professionalism is fundamental to the delivery of quality health care.¹ It is multi-dimensional and extends well beyond the attributes of an individual person. It permeates the entire profession, from individual pharmacy professionals and support staff to pharmacy learners, managers, owners, corporations, businesses, healthcare establishments, educational institutions, researchers, educators, examiners, accreditors, associations, and regulators, among others.

A multitude of factors shape the culture of professionalism,² so it is not surprising that different individuals and stakeholders, such as employers, educators, regulators, and the public, may have developed different concepts of professionalism. Thus, the culture of professionalism in pharmacy becomes misaligned, with different parties striving toward different goals. This leaves pharmacy professionals in a difficult position, as it is challenging to develop a strong professional identity and strong understanding of professional behaviour expectations, when different messages are being received from different sources. To move forward, it is important that all parties come to a common understanding of professionalism in pharmacy practice. When all parties are embracing the same concept of professionalism, pharmacy professionals can be supported to move forward to share the full benefit of their expertise with patients.

Although not indicated in each statement, it is important to note that these principles must be applied while respecting all existing laws, regulations, standards of practice, and other official requirements in each jurisdiction.

Goal:

To define the principles of professionalism that the profession of pharmacy agrees to strive toward and to open the dialogue around professionalism with stakeholders across the profession.

¹ Readers are encouraged to read *The culture of professionalism in pharmacy white paper* for more information.

² Same as above.

Introduction

Why is professionalism important?

There is growing recognition that an environment in which professionalism is not embraced results in errors, adverse events, and unsafe work conditions.³ Across Canada and internationally, concerns about the culture of professionalism in regulated health professions, including pharmacy, have led various organizations to take actions to address professionalism.⁴ Some examples include the development of a framework for professionalism by the Alberta College of Pharmacy, the development of a Professional Autonomy Framework by the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals, the establishment of a Professionalism Committee by the Association of Faculties of Pharmacy of Canada, a project by the College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario to define the components of enhanced professionalism, and the development and incorporation of right-touch regulation by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care in the United Kingdom (UK).

If the entire profession strives to embrace common principles of professionalism, the hope is that this will strengthen the culture of professionalism in pharmacy, to enable the profession to provide the full benefit of its expertise to patients and the healthcare system.

Framing professionalism by defining what pharmacy collectively (and not only individual pharmacists or pharmacy technicians) can do to enhance the culture of professionalism provides opportunities to integrate all arms of the profession and to strengthen the quality of care the profession of pharmacy provides to Canadians.

To whom do these principles apply?

The eight Principles of Professionalism apply to the **entire profession**, no matter what role each individual plays or where they work. While the principles themselves are designed to be interpreted and applied by the entire profession, some of the more detailed statements within the document may be more relevant to a particular role than others.

Readers should consider how each statement might be interpreted for their particular role and should not immediately assume that a particular statement does not apply to them.

Subsequent steps in the project will provide opportunities for stakeholders to work together to determine how the various statements can be applied to their respective work.

3 Readers are encouraged to read *The culture of professionalism in pharmacy white paper* for more information.

4 Same as above.

Introduction

How does this document differ from other NAPRA or other pharmacy regulatory documents?

The *Principles of Professionalism* are distinct from other regulatory documents issued by NAPRA and its member pharmacy regulatory authorities (PRAs). These are not meant to be regulatory requirements that will be enforced or measured; rather, they are the principles that the profession collectively agrees to strive toward. This document does not replace a code of ethics or any standard of practice issued by a PRA. Instead, it builds on the minimum requirements outlined in such documents to define a common understanding of professionalism.

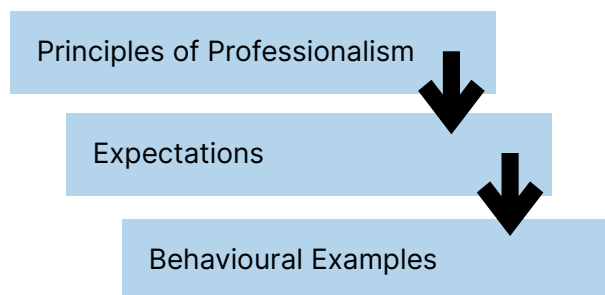
While the concepts of ethics, standards, and professionalism overlap to a certain extent, there are distinct differences. For example, not all issues within codes of ethics pertain directly to professionalism and not all issues within professionalism are matters of ethical concern.

These principles outline expectations and examples of professionalism in pharmacy and serve as a basis for the next steps of identifying how each stakeholder can uphold them in their day-to-day activities, with the goal of strengthening the culture of professionalism in pharmacy.

How is this document organized?

To help guide the profession in upholding the principles, the document provides two additional levels of detail. The first level outlines the expectations when applying the principles. The second level describes examples of behaviour that would demonstrate the associated expectations and principles.

Because the principles are linked, there can be overlap between the sections, but the context will be slightly different depending on the principle under which a particular statement falls.



Introduction

Next steps

Enhancing the culture of professionalism does not end with simply providing a list of principles. It requires ongoing dialogue and engagement across all sectors of the profession. The social, workplace, systemic, and regulatory context within which individuals practise is as important as the individual characteristics they demonstrate in defining a culture of professionalism.

NAPRA is committed to continuing to engage the profession in taking the next steps in this process, including delving further into certain topics, such as the interplay between professional identity, professional autonomy, and external factors;⁵ working together to determine how the principles, expectations, and behavioural examples may be applied to the work of each respective stakeholder; and identifying ways to uphold these principles in each of our respective day-to-day activities. NAPRA will be reaching out to pharmacy stakeholders in the near future to work on next steps in this important project.



⁵ Readers are encouraged to read *The culture of professionalism in pharmacy white paper* for more information.

Glossary

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) published its final report detailing the experiences and impacts of the residential school system, creating a historical record of its legacy and consequences. One outcome of the report was a document detailing 94 calls to action across a wide range of areas including child welfare, education, health, justice, language, and culture. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Determinants of health

The broad range of personal, social, economic, and environmental factors that determine individual and population health (income and social status; employment and working conditions; education and literacy; childhood experiences; physical environments; social supports and coping skills; healthy behaviours; access to health services; biology and genetic endowment; gender; culture; race/racism). Social determinants of health refer to a specific group of social and economic factors within the broader determinants of health. These relate to an individual's place in society, such as income, education, or employment. Experiences of discrimination, racism, and historical trauma are important social determinants of health for certain groups such as Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ and Black Canadians. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html>

Evidence-informed

The ongoing process that incorporates best available evidence from research findings, clinical expertise, patient preferences, and other available resources to inform decisions. [Derived from https://hl-prod-ca-oc-download.s3-ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/CNA/2f975e7e-4a40-45ca-863c-5ebf0a138d5e/UploadedImages/documents/Evidence_informed_Decision_making_and_Nursing_Practice_position_statement_Dec_2018.pdf]

Principles of Professionalism

The profession of pharmacy:*

-  1. **Cares for** patients and their support networks as its primary motivation
-  2. **Cares about** the community and the health system
-  3. **Collaborates with** other health professions in a patient-focused manner
-  4. **Cares about** the quality and integrity of the profession
-  5. **Is a steward** of resources to support a sustainable healthcare system
-  6. **Is accountable** to patients, communities, and society for decisions made and actions taken
-  7. **Is trustworthy** and demonstrates fairness and honesty in all interactions
-  8. **Is conscientious** in fulfilling duties to the best of its collective abilities

* For the purposes of this document, the profession of pharmacy includes all stakeholders related to pharmacy practice including, but not limited to: regulated pharmacy professionals, pharmacy support staff, pharmacy learners, pharmacy managers, pharmacy owners, pharmacy corporations and businesses, healthcare establishments (hospitals, multidisciplinary clinics, compounding facilities, etc.), educational institutions, pharmacy researchers, pharmacy educators, pharmacy examiners and accreditors, pharmacy associations, and pharmacy regulators.



Cares for patients and their support networks as its primary motivation

The profession of pharmacy:

Places the best interests of the patient as the principal priority

Behavioural examples:

- Prioritize the best interests of the patient above self-interest and business and financial interests
- Prioritize patient needs and safety in the formulation of business practices and policies
- Enable a supportive environment that allows pharmacy professionals to exercise independent professional judgment to ensure individual patient needs are met
- Practise to full scope⁶ and exercise appropriate professional judgment to ensure individual patient needs are met
- Respectfully balance patient preferences, needs, culture, values, and required pharmacy care with health system constraints to optimize patient care

Practises and promotes inclusion and equity in patient care

Behavioural examples:

- Engage in education and training around systemic racism, cultural safety, and cultural competency
- Be aware of and incorporate the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, particularly with respect to health issues and health professional education
- Create spaces in which all patients feel culturally and emotionally safe when receiving care
- Ensure individuals are protected from physical harm when receiving care, including minimizing the risk of disease transmission and physical violence
- Recognize and acknowledge personal biases and take steps to overcome these biases

⁶ Practising to full scope means practising to the full extent of one's competencies, knowledge, and skills, in alignment with the authorizations granted by the laws and regulations of one's province or territory.

Develops trusting professional relationships with patients and their support networks

Behavioural examples:

- Respect professional boundaries with patients and their support networks
- Engage patients and their support networks in shared decision-making
- Respect and maintain patient confidentiality
- Enable and empower patients as partners in the delivery of their health care
- Communicate with patients and their support networks in a respectful, clear, and effective manner
- Support patients and their support networks to feel comfortable sharing information with pharmacy professionals

Enables patient access to required care regardless of personal values

Behavioural examples:

- Implement policies and procedures that address patient access and conscientious objection
- Provide a non-judgmental, respectful, timely, and effective referral in the event of conscientious objection
- Recognize personal biases and take steps to ensure they do not affect fair and equitable patient access to quality care

Advocates for patients

Behavioural examples:

- Advocate for fair and equitable access to health care so that patient characteristics (e.g., finances, culture, language, ethnicity, sexual identity/orientation) do not serve as barriers to receiving quality care
- Advocate on behalf of patients for their right to safe and effective medication
- Help patients and their support networks navigate the health system



The profession of pharmacy:

Creates working and learning environments that support quality pharmacy care

Behavioural examples:

- Support professional autonomy and professional judgment so that patients and the health system receive the full benefit of pharmacy professionals' skills
- Provide an environment where ethical standards and professional autonomy are facilitated
- Ensure workplace practices (e.g., staffing ratios, workflow) and environments (e.g., physical layout) provide sufficient support for individuals to practise to full scope in a sustainable manner
- Implement managerial best practices that ensure that pharmacy professionals can fully contribute to optimal patient and health system outcomes
- Share examples of managerial practices that demonstrate the value of high-quality care in creating sustainable pharmacy practices
- Create opportunities for all team members to provide input regarding workplace conditions and design

Practises and promotes evidence-informed health care

Behavioural examples:

- Support an environment where practice aligns with evidence-informed health care
- Ensure access to resources to enable evidence-informed decision-making
- Evaluate and use evidence-based literature and resources when providing patient care and/or developing healthcare policy
- Act in accordance with professional standards and scientific principles
- Make evidence-informed decisions
- Counteract health misinformation

Contributes its expertise to promote public and community health

Behavioural examples:

- Build partnerships with public and community health organizations
- Engage in public and community health activities
- Learn about the community in which they practise and their role within it
- Integrate determinants of health approaches in daily activities
- Develop trusting relationships with members of the community and the local health system
- Collaborate with other health professionals in the community to promote public and community health
- Engage in community- and population-based research as appropriate

Promotes fair, equitable, and timely access to required care

Behavioural examples:

- Recognize and take responsibility to understand systemic racism and discrimination, and its impact on communities, the health system, and access to care
- Be aware of relevant terminology that addresses issues of systemic racism and discrimination
- Ensure that practice supports fair, equitable, and timely access to care regardless of patient characteristics (e.g., finances, culture, language, ethnicity, sexual identity/orientation)
- Prioritize patient access to required care in emergency or crisis situations



Collaborates with other health professions in a patient-focused manner

The profession of pharmacy:

Creates awareness of the role and the scope of practice of pharmacy professionals

Behavioural examples:

- Communicate and demonstrate pharmacy scope of practice to other health professions
- Engage in interprofessional discussions around respective scopes of practice to promote the most efficient, effective, and appropriate methods of collaboration
- Utilize full scope when collaborating with other health professions and only refer when it is in the best interests of the patient

Communicates clearly and respectfully with other health professions

Behavioural examples:

- Recognize and address barriers to communication and effectively manage conflict with other health professions
- Ensure that documentation of pharmacy care can be easily understood by other health professionals to facilitate collaboration and continuity of care
- Strengthen relationships by being transparent and using one's full name and role/profession when communicating with other health professions
- Foster trust by referring to evidence-based information that supports one's decisions when communicating with other health professions
- Respect the scope, role, expertise, and diverse experiences of other health professions to facilitate effective communication and provide optimal patient care
- Use concise and efficient communication to show respect for other health professionals' time

Facilitates effective transitions of care as patients move between healthcare settings and health professionals

Behavioural examples:

- Implement effective systems that support seamless care for patients
- Collaborate and partner with other health professions and with patients to facilitate effective transitions of care





The profession of pharmacy:

Promotes positive and safe working and learning environments

Behavioural examples:

- Implement managerial practices that promote positive morale
- Mentor learners and colleagues and provide opportunities for them to adopt the principles of professionalism through experiential learning
- Lead by example and encourage others to develop and embrace professionalism
- Seek out mentors who demonstrate professionalism
- Maintain professional boundaries with colleagues and others in the work environment
- Make a personal commitment to support and promote a professional culture in working and learning environments

Builds resilience and promotes wellness within the profession

Behavioural examples:

- Safeguard the pharmacy workforce by implementing practices and initiatives that build system resilience
- Promote wellness and create resilient employees to minimize burnout and exiting from the profession
- Support employees, colleagues, and learners in building their own resilience and well-being to guard against potential negative effects on professionalism and/or patient care
- Communicate with employees, colleagues, and learners who may be experiencing signs and symptoms of stress and burnout to help them access available supports
- Collaborate with employees and colleagues in building systemic resilience to guard against potential negative effects on professionalism and/or patient care
- Invest in one's own individual resilience and well-being by self-monitoring and self-managing stress and burnout to guard against potential negative effects on professionalism and/or patient care
- Identify and access supports that prevent burnout and enhance professionalism

Creates inclusive and equitable working and learning environments

Behavioural examples:

- Foster environments of support and safe dialogue with respect to addressing systemic racism, cultural competence, and safety
- Create safe, inclusive spaces for all individuals participating in the working and/or learning environment
- Create inclusive, diverse, and equitable working and learning environments
- Be fair, transparent, impartial, and open in working and learning environment practices
- Strive for diverse, inclusive representation in workplaces, boards, committees, and other governance structures
- Apply principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion with regard to hiring, appointments, and promotions
- Implement policies that address incidents of bullying, intimidation, and harassment
- Take a role in addressing systemic racism and discrimination
- Treat others (e.g., co-workers, colleagues, employees, learners, stakeholders, other professionals) with respect and dignity

Practises to full scope and empowers and supports others to do the same

Behavioural examples:

- Develop practice environments that include appropriate differentiation of workforce to empower all individuals to practise to full scope
- Commit to regular collaboration across pharmacy sectors
- Contribute to the continuing evolution of the profession
- Support pharmacy practice research to showcase the contributions of the profession to patient care outcomes and health system objectives
- Contribute to the knowledge bank of the profession by sharing practice experience with colleagues from across the profession (e.g., submitting a letter regarding an unusual case, contributing to blogs or discussions, attending conferences)



Is a steward of resources to support a sustainable healthcare system

The profession of pharmacy:

Applies its expertise to ensure appropriate, safe, and cost-effective therapy

Behavioural examples:

- Develop policies and procedures for adverse drug reaction reporting in alignment with professional standards and requirements to contribute to the identification of safety signals that would affect a drug's risk-benefit profile
- Actively engage in adverse drug reaction reporting in accordance with professional standards and requirements
- Promote evidence-informed healthcare practices, respectful of specific context and health-related circumstances, to improve the health of the community and the overall health system
- Promote the application of evidence-informed healthcare practices in public discourse around safe and effective therapy

Uses scope of practice to support care by the most appropriate health professional

Behavioural examples:

- Enable all pharmacy professionals to practise to full scope
- Support future scope of practice changes that are in the best interest of the public and ensure the most efficient use of healthcare resources, based on the competencies of the profession
- Promote efficient and cost-effective use of healthcare resources by practising to scope and avoiding unnecessary referrals when pharmacy-led decision-making is appropriate and is in the patient's best interest
- Refer patients when they require the expertise of other health professions

Safeguards the drug and health product supply chain

Behavioural examples:

- Ensure that ordering practices safeguard against the introduction of counterfeit products into the supply chain
- Continuously monitor supply chain issues and shortages to minimize disruptions for patients
- Undertake all reasonable steps to prevent diversion of products to the illicit market
- Develop guidance to support clinical and technical decision-making where supply chain disruptions occur
- Advocate for and participate in national strategies to mitigate supply chain issues
- Adapt work processes to support continuity of care during times of emergency or crisis



Principle #6 — The profession of pharmacy:

Is accountable to patients, communities, and society for decisions made and actions taken

The profession of pharmacy:

Demonstrates transparency with respect to clinical, technical, and/or policy-related decision-making

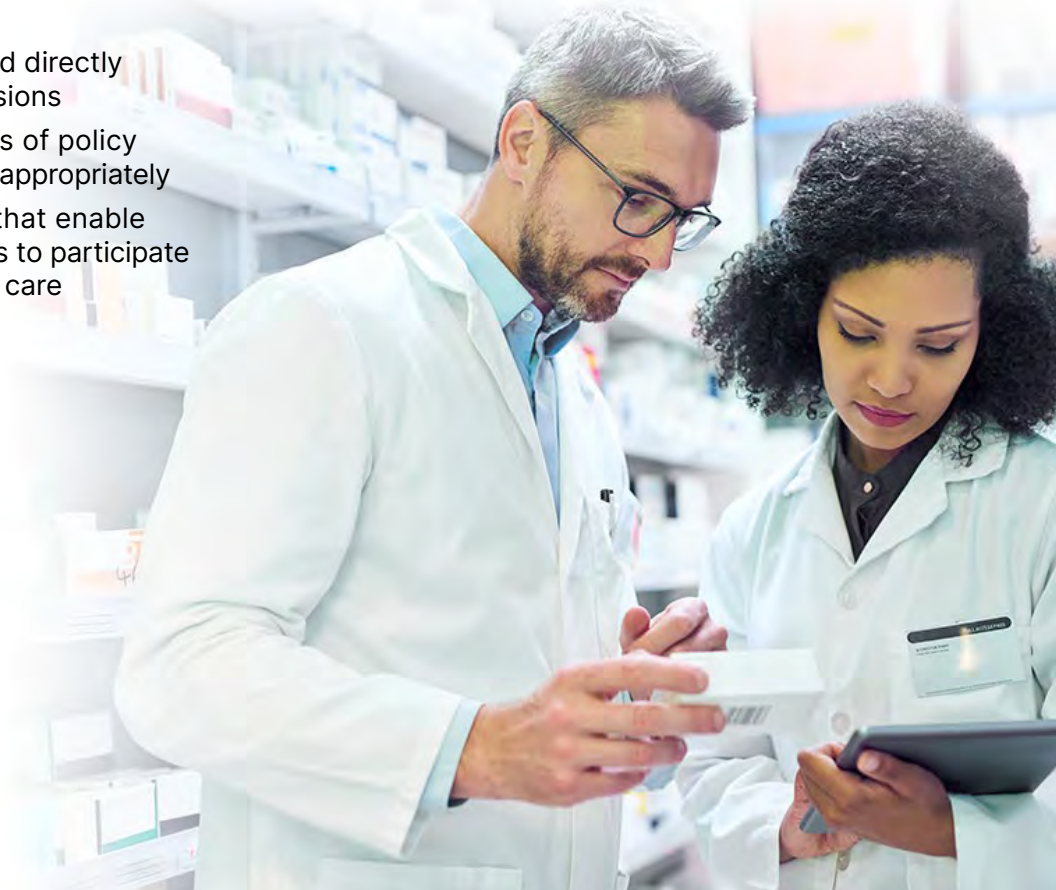
Behavioural examples:

- Disclose the outcomes of clinical and/or technical decisions to patients, other health professionals, and other stakeholders as appropriate
- Accept responsibility for outcomes of clinical and/or technical decisions
- Handle errors in clinical and/or technical decisions according to professional standards and requirements, including disclosure to the patient, other health professionals, or other stakeholders as appropriate
- Include patients and their support networks in decision-making regarding their care
- Share the outcomes of policy decisions with pharmacy professionals, patients, other health professionals, and other stakeholders as appropriate
- Communicate openly, honestly, and directly with those affected by policy decisions
- Accept responsibility for outcomes of policy decisions and handle policy issues appropriately
- Develop policies and procedures that enable patients and their support networks to participate in decision-making regarding their care

Uses professional judgment and accepts responsibility for making decisions

Behavioural examples:

- Recognize that scientific evidence and clinical guidance may not address every unique circumstance and use professional judgment to make decisions that are appropriate for the particular patient or situation
- Accept responsibility and accountability for decisions made, including when definitive evidence is unavailable





Is trustworthy and demonstrates fairness and honesty in all interactions

The profession of pharmacy:

Demonstrates transparency and openness in business, operational, and professional practices

Behavioural examples:

- Communicate and share information with stakeholders regarding business, operational, and professional practices that affect patients (e.g., drug pricing, short refills, supply chain issues)
- Commit to acknowledging, openly discussing, and applying effective change to business, operational, and professional practices that conflict with the exercise of professional autonomy and professional judgment
- Implement business, operational, and professional practices that align with professional standards and expectations and address those that may conflict
- Communicate and share information with patients regarding operational and professional practices and improvements made in response to medication incidents and continuous quality improvement activities

Enables patients to provide informed consent and make informed decisions

Behavioural examples:

- Support patients' autonomy and right to know regarding decisions affecting their health and the dissemination of their personal health information
- Communicate effectively and clearly with patients, their caregivers, and other stakeholders to ensure informed and meaningful consent is obtained
- Ensure that patients are aware of and consent to business arrangements that include the sharing of patient information with other entities

Promotes patient autonomy

Behavioural examples:

- Implement operational and managerial practices that respect patients' autonomy to make informed choices about the services they wish to receive
- Communicate effectively with patients to ensure that they feel heard, understood, and acknowledged
- Respect patients' informed choices regarding healthcare decisions even if these conflict with one's own
- Present evidence-based information in an unbiased manner without pressure to allow patients autonomy to interpret and apply as they see fit

Ensures patient confidentiality and respects the right to privacy

Behavioural examples:

- Implement and monitor systems to protect the personal health information of patients, in alignment with relevant regulatory and legal requirements
- Ensure environment and infrastructure are conducive to opportunities for private conversations
- Respect and uphold legislation, standards, and other requirements related to patient confidentiality and privacy

Fosters trust in the profession and the health system by holding each other responsible for actions and behaviours

Behavioural examples:

- Implement whistleblower protection such that individuals can safely share information or concerns (e.g., financial matters, procurement matters, or any unethical, illegal, or improper conduct) without fear of reprisal
- Cooperate fully with investigative procedures aimed at enhancing the quality and safety of care
- Use available employer and/or regulatory body processes to alert authorities to potentially harmful or dangerous practices and behaviours



Is conscientious in fulfilling duties to the best of its collective abilities

The profession of pharmacy:

Contributes to a culture of continuous quality improvement

Behavioural examples:

- Provide organizational support for the implementation of continuous quality improvement, including medication incident reporting programs
- Commit to lifelong continuous improvement through personal engagement in continuous quality improvement and medication incident reporting programs

Commits to continuing professional development

Behavioural examples:

- Provide organizational support for continuing professional development
- Maintain and enhance personal knowledge and skills by committing to continuing professional development

Engages in reflective practice

Behavioural examples:

- Provide organizational support for self-assessment to act on knowledge, skills, and confidence gaps and integrate new learning into practice
- Implement managerial practices (e.g., performance feedback reviews) that support self-assessment of knowledge, skills, and confidence gaps
- Actively engage in self-assessment and act on practice- and knowledge-related gaps

Collaborates with colleagues across the profession

Behavioural examples:

- Create organizational structures that foster collaboration and prioritize the best interests of patients/the public over business/financial interests
- Foster a culture of collaboration across the profession by committing to and engaging in effective and supportive intraprofessional communication with other parts of the pharmacy community
- Share knowledge and best practices across the profession to collectively improve patient care
- Recognize the value that each role within the profession contributes and avoid hierarchal attitudes, behaviours, and representations of the profession
- Engage in intraprofessional discussions around respective scopes of practice to determine the most efficient, effective, and appropriate methods of collaboration



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