



SDCPhA Voice

Newsletter of the San Diego County Pharmacists Association
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California Pharmacists Association

President's Message *By Helen Park, SDCPhA President*

ARE YOU READY?

Recently I attended a CE program focusing on automation. It was, if anything, an eye opening experience. Sure we've all heard about automation increasingly becoming a part of pharmacy practice, and if you are like me, you responded with something along the lines of "well, maybe one day but surely not in my pharmacy – automation is for those really huge operations; it doesn't affect the average pharmacist." Right? Don't be so sure.

At a 237-bed general acute care facility in Yorba, California, a staff of 10 pharmacists and 12 technicians operate the 24-hour main pharmacy and 7 satellites and provide on-floor pharmacy services. The best part is that only 10% of the prescriptions filled by this particular pharmacy department are done with human hands. That's not a typo. By utilizing machines, this hospital, along with many others throughout the country, have developed a system by which pharmacist hours are spent predominantly away from a dispensing area. Machines run the whole show – everything from processing prescriptions, dispensing, checking, delivering and verifying administration of the medication. Since converting to their ultra-automated system, pharmacy costs have decreased, efficiency has increased, dispensing errors have become a thing of the past, and the best part, pharmacists are happier. Surely their pharmacists must be concerned with job security? Absolutely not. Instead of answering phones and counting by fives or filling IVs for endless hours, they spend their time consulting patients and physicians on the floors. In other words, they are doing exactly what they were trained to do.

Those of us in community pharmacy

are not exempt from the far-reaching tentacles of technology. Many of the chain pharmacies use robots such as ScriptPro in their community pharmacies to fill the majority of their prescriptions. In San Diego, Vons and Rite-Aid have implemented such a system in many of their stores, and, as expected, volume and sales have escalated accordingly for both companies without having to increase the number of staff.

So, what does all this mean? Is the shortage over? Are we out of jobs? Just the contrary. As pharmacists, we should be thrilled. Technology will free us from the mundane world of pouring and counting; it will enable us to spend more time providing consultations. We will finally get a chance to stretch our brains and apply the knowledge we painstakingly accumulated during school and from years of working on the job. The idea may be frightening to some; initially, using the spatula as a shield against having to talk to patients may sound more appealing, and I must concede that with some patients, this is very true and very necessary. However, the time is at hand for pharmacists to take the proverbial leap into the unknown before technology makes us obsolete.

Although the idea of pharmaceutical care (or pharmacist care) has been around for over two de-

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Newsletter Editor: Eric Gupta



Dates to Remember

September 26, 2002
SDCPhA & SDSHSP Presents
Pharmacy Student & Resident Happy Hour
El Torito Restaurant, La Jolla, CA

September 26, 2002
CPhA Board of Trustees Meeting
CPhA Headquarters, Sacramento, CA

September 27, 2002
CPhA Educational Foundation Board Meeting
Sheraton Hotel, Sacramento, CA

September 27-29, 2002
Western Pharmacy Education Faire
Sheraton/Convention Center, Sacramento, CA

October 19, 2002
CPhA Emergency Contraception Training,
Riverside, CA
For reservations contact Shannon at
800-444-3851 ext 324 or spresidio@cpha.com

October 19-23, 2002
National Community Pharmacists Association
Annual Convention & Trade Expo
Opryland Hotel, Nashville, TN
For details, call (703) 683-8200

October 20-26, 2002
National Pharmacy Week

October 26, 2002
CPhA Emergency Contraception Training,
Redding, CA
For reservations contact Shannon at
800-444-3851 ext 324 or spresidio@cpha.com

Upcoming Educational Programs: 2002
See <http://www.sdcpha.com/>
and click "education" for up-to-date dates

COME AND JOIN US!

When: 3rd Tuesday of each month at
6:30pm

Where: San Diego VA Medical Center
Pharmacy Office, Basement (B152)

For more information, please contact
us at www.sdcpha.com

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cedes, it has yet to blossom in mainstream pharmacy practice as originally envisioned. The reluctance of HMOs and others to compensate for non-dispensing services may be the de-motivating factor for most practice settings. From a purely business standpoint, I am certain this is the primary reason that so many seats remain unoccupied on the pharmaceutical care bandwagon. Nevertheless, we must not waste time in preparing ourselves for the inevitable. Technology will only become bigger and better, and it will overtake the dispensing role of the pharmacist eventually. It is merely a matter of time. Why? Because of four simple facts. Machines cost less – they do not need breaks or medical insurance, they provide a source of tax benefit, they can work around the clock. Machines do not cause dispensing errors – as much as we hate to admit it, people make mistakes, not machines. Machines require very little maintenance – aside from the infrequent software update, all you have to do is plug it in. There are no personnel problems, personality conflicts, or work place drama. Last, and definitely not least, machines are faster - ever try to out dispense a ScriptPro? I don't recommend it.

While we wait (with bated breath) the delivery of our very own ScriptPro or its close relative, what are we to do? We must first expand our concept of the modern pharmacist. Then we must prepare ourselves with education; disease state management classes and training in pharmacoeconomics or business management, for example, can prepare us for what may soon become a non-dispensing world for pharmacists. And lastly, we must support legislative changes that will help safeguard our profession through action – letter writing, talking to legislators, and becoming active in CPhA. We must form a collective voice and remain vigilant in protecting the profession of pharmacy, because no one else will do that for us. Automation is here to stay, and most likely, it is coming soon to a pharmacy near you. Are you ready?

SDCPhA Member Announcements

Congratulations to Glen Schniepp and Joan Abbott! Married May 4, 2002.

It's a boy! Congratulations! Ian Michael Moore, weighing in at 7 pounds and 14 ounces with a length of 20 & 1/4 inches, born to Randy and Tracey Moore at 6:50PM on Monday, August 19, 2002.

Board meetings are open to the general membership and are generally held the third Tuesday of each month at the VA Medical Center, La Jolla, B152 - 6:30PM.

Upcoming CE's – Practical Applications of Pharmacoeconomics of Anemia Management given by Anthony P. Morreale, PharmD, VA San Diego. Location: Bertrand & Mister A's. Register online at www.sdcpha.com



Welcome!

*The San Diego County Pharmacist Association &
The San Diego Society of Health-System Pharmacists*

welcome you to the

2002-2003 San Diego Pharmacy Student & Pharmacy Resident Happy Hour

When: Thursday, September 26th

Where: El Torito Restaurant - 8910 Villa La Jolla Dr.

Stop by the outdoor patio between 5:30pm-7:30pm
Appetizers & non-alcoholic beverages will be provided



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

San Diego County Pharmacists Association
Website: www.sdcpna.com
6549 Mission Gorge Road, #101
San Diego, CA 92120

2002 Western Pharmacy Education Faire

September 27-29, 2002

Sacramento Convention Center, Sheraton Grand Hotel

"Pharmacy is Branching Out"

Register on-site for this amazing weekend of
Continuing Education, Networking and Socializing!

You can also register for *Injectable Hormonal Contraceptive Training* on-site!

For more information visit www.cpha.com
or call us at (916) 444-7811 ext. 326.

