



Pharmacist on the Front Lines of a Pandemic - Q&A with Connor Lohues

Connor Lohues is a practicing pharmacist who's had the opportunity to work in both inner-city Edmonton and Sherwood Park with Mint Health + Drugs where he began developing a passion for clinical pharmacy within the community setting. His current practice focusses on management of chronic diseases and addressing gaps in care through the use of APA.

Q: How did you find yourself needing to prepare for an unexpected pandemic?

A: Most of my prep was just reviewing the information provided to us by RxA and ACP and trying to stay on top of the very fluid situation. I also made sure to follow news briefings that were released every day. Everything happened very quickly as I returned from vacation (and was isolated) at the beginning of March and so when I started working again my pharmacy teams were already in the thick of it.

Q: How are you addressing the safety of your staff and patients during this time?

A: The pharmacies that I work at have tackled challenges each in their own way. Primarily, safety is promoted through barriers, physical distancing, proper PPE and delivery/curbside pickup as much as possible. I think that the quick response of RxA to acquire PPE helped a lot, as it ended up taking a while for AHS to handle the logistics and I imagine an extra week or two without PPE would have increased stress levels even more.

Q: In what ways are you finding barriers to patient care with physical distancing?

A: As we are now hidden behind masks and plexiglass barriers, patient interactions have changed significantly. There are also limited patients allowed in the store at one time, and many patients prefer to have medications delivered rather than expose themselves by coming into the pharmacy. Communication has certainly become more difficult, and there is also an increased need for communication as many patients have questions and concerns about COVID-19.

Q: How are you finding ways to overcome the communication and patient care barriers?

A: In my job as a clinical pharmacist, my new normal is sitting at a desk with a phone rather than in the counselling room. While this took some getting used to, I think that patients have been extremely appreciative of us checking in on them. Many patients also choose to return home and then call me to discuss their medication rather than wait in the store to ask questions. I have found that many patients are delaying seeking care for minor ailments (and some major ones) and so pharmacist advice (and sometimes encouragement to go to the doctor or even emergency department) has been in high demand.

Q: How are you managing the extra cleaning practices?



A: Cleaning duties are shared by several staff members, and they are following a routine to help make sure we clean often enough and cover all the areas of contact. Cleaning workstations and counters has just become part of regular practice.

Q: Similarly, how is your pharmacy team finding ways to stay healthy and relieve stress?

A: I think that everyone is trying to stay positive and just share stories and jokes related to the absurd reality we live in now. We have made a habit of ordering lunch as a group a bit more than before to help out some of our favorite local restaurants as well. I make sure to take a break in the day (as I am fortunate to have pharmacist overlap) to take a walk outside as I find some fresh air helps me re-focus for the remainder of the day.