

MARKET SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

**Report of the Market Supplement Review
Committee**

Pharmacist

Second Annual Review

Final Report

October 15, 2004

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Saskatchewan Market Supplement Program is to ensure that Saskatchewan health care employers can attract and retain the employees required to provide appropriate health care services to the people of Saskatchewan.

This program is designed to address specific skill shortages by use of a temporary market supplement to attract and/or retain qualified employees. The program is designed to ensure that temporary market supplements respond to valid labour market criteria to address recruitment and/or retention pressures.

OVERVIEW

The Market Supplement Review Committee (MSRC) reviewed updated documentation submitted in the annual review process regarding the market supplement for the Pharmacist classification. The initial market supplement report was released by the Market Supplement Review Committee August 6, 2002 and implemented on October 16, 2002. The first annual review was conducted by the MSRC in October 2003. The MSRC recommended to maintain the existing market supplement at that time. This latest report is to be considered as part of the on-going review of the market supplement process for this classification as described in the SAHO/HSAS Letters of Understanding pertaining to the Market Supplement Process. This is the second annual review for the Pharmacist classification.

There were ten health regions that reported to this analysis on the Pharmacist classification. Pharmacists are members of the Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS). HSAS was invited to submit any relevant information to this review.

Role of a Pharmacist

Pharmacists are employed in hospitals and related health institutions. Their role is critical to ensuring that patients in hospitals, frequently on complicated and potentially toxic medications, receive safe and effective therapy. This practice area offers opportunities to interact with other health professionals, the potential for significant intervention in patient care and the chance to be involved in research and education. Pharmacists who work in hospitals are effective members of the health care team and are actively involved in upgrading their education and knowledge base. Many of them specialise in fields such as oncology, infectious disease, psychiatry, etc.

Qualifications

In order to be licensed as a Pharmacist in Canada, candidates must be obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Pharmacy from a Canadian University and to complete a national board examination through the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada. One year pre-pharmacy is required prior to the Degree program. Pharmacy students must also have obtained practical experience through an apprenticeship/internship program.

According to the Canadian Pharmacists Association there are nine universities in Canada that offer a Bachelor's Degree in Pharmacy including the University of Saskatchewan.

The Pharmacy College at the University of Saskatchewan accepts eighty first year students to the program each year. The average number of graduates per year is between seventy and seventy-seven.

Information regarding budgeted positions and vacancies is provided in the following table.

Table 1 – Pharmacists – Budgeted and vacant positions (August 2004)

Health Regions	Number of Budgeted Positions (As of August, 2004)		Number of Vacant Positions (As of August, 2004)		% Vacancy	
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time
Cypress	1	-	-	-	-	-
Five Hills	3	1	-	-	-	-
Heartland	-	3	-	-	-	-
Kelsey Trail	1	1	-	-	-	-
*Prairie North	3	3	1	-	33%	-
Prince Albert Parkland	4	2	1	-	25%	-
Regina Qu'Appelle	Staff – 29	Staff – 5	Staff – 2	-	Staff – 6.8%	-
**Saskatoon	Pharm D – 6 Senior – 2 Staff – 24	Senior – 1 Staff – 12	-	-	-	-
Sun Country	1	1	-	1	-	100%
Sunrise	Senior – 1 Staff – 3	Staff – 2	-	-	-	-
TOTAL:	Pharm D – 6 Senior – 3 Staff – 69	Senior – 1 Staff – 30	Staff – 4	Staff – 1	Staff – 5.7%	Staff – 3.3%
	TOTAL: 78	TOTAL: 31	TOTAL: 4	TOTAL: 1	TOTAL: 5.1%	TOTAL: 3.2%

*Prairie North also has 1 p/t temporary position that is vacant.

**Saskatoon also has 6 temporary positions.

ANALYSIS

The MSRC discussed the Labour Market Criteria as required by the Market Supplement Program framework.

SERVICE DELIVERY IMPACTS: (Employers were asked to provide information that addresses current service delivery impacts resulting from staff shortages, potential staff short term service delivery impacts, potential long term service delivery impacts and options for alternative service delivery models).

Health regions have continued to report improvements to overall service delivery as the vacancy rate continues to decrease. Seven of the reporting health regions have stated minor service delivery issues. One region reported moderate service issues, while the other two regions report no service issues.

One region reported that although they have successfully recruited to vacancies, it remains difficult to hire trained hospital Pharmacists. The amount of additional orientation and training needed to bring new staff “up to speed” in the hospital environment is time consuming and challenging for existing staff due to additional workload.

VACANCY RATE ANALYSIS: *(Employers were requested to provide information about the frequency and timing of vacancy occurrences {i.e., seasonal vacancies; do the vacancies always follow an event; etc.} and to identify trends that may affect recruitment/retention efforts).*

Since the last annual review of October 2003, the overall vacancy rate has declined to 5.1% for full time positions. The vacancy rate for part time positions has declined to 3.2% during the past year.

Regions have reported that filling vacancies can take considerable time. Pharmacists hired to work in hospitals require more training and orientation than those who work in the retail sector.

Table 2 – Pharmacists - Budgeted and vacant position comparisons (2002/2003/2004)

Pharmacist Classification (all levels)	Number of Budgeted Positions		Number of Vacant Budgeted Positions		% Vacancy	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
2002 Totals	84	39	12	2	14%	5%
2003 Totals	82	35	8	3	9.7%	8.5%
2004 Totals	78	31	4	1	5.1%	3.2%

*Disclaimer: Data reported in Table 1 and/or Table 2 may be as a result of different employers reporting year to year.

TURNOVER RATES: *(Employers were asked to provide local analysis of reasons for leaving and trends that may be emerging. They were also asked to provide annual turnover {loss of employees to other competitor employers} ratio to the existing staff complement {budgeted positions} in the given occupation.).*

Of the regions that track and report turnover, the following is reported:

- 2004 (year to date) – 4
- 2003 – 4
- 2002 – 4
- 2001 – 2

Turnover reported above includes reasons such as retirements, spousal transfer, wage rates, retail pharmacies and others. Discrepancies in data may be as a result of different employers reporting year to year.

Two employers expressed concern about retaining the students in their pharmacy residency programs. Some residents have resigned for higher paying positions with retail employers despite having received provincial bursaries and possibly region bursaries as well. One region stated that they have seen a significant reduction in the number of applicants for residency opportunities in recent years i.e. from 16 – 18 applicants per year 5 years ago, to 4 – 6 applicants over the past 2 years.

RECRUITMENT ISSUE ANALYSIS: *(Employers were asked to provide information such as length of recruitment times, training investments, licensing issues, supply and demand issues, etc., as well as information that would identify trends that may affect recruitment and/or retention efforts).*

Five regions have reported minor recruitment efforts while five regions reported significant recruitment initiatives.

The following recruitment and retention initiatives have been utilized over the past year:

- Offering higher initial pay rates (three regions),
- Changing job responsibilities (three region),
- Using other classifications (six regions),
- Advertising (five regions),
- Offering residencies (two regions),
- Offering recruitment allowances (three region),
- Relocation assistance (five regions),
- Attending career fairs (four regions),
- Training allowances (three regions) and,
- Increasing the number of FTE's (four regions).

One region stated that they have seen a significant reduction in the number of applicants for residency opportunities in recent years i.e. from 16 – 18 applicants per year 5 years ago, to 4 – 6 applicants over the past 2 years. Regions have stated that it is important to attempt to recruit the new grads to hospitals otherwise if they go to work in the retail sector they are unlikely to come back.

Regions reported that the retail sector remains as the main competitor although at the time of the writing of this report, other provincial jurisdictions are and will be recruiting Pharmacists due to additional resources being allocated to the pharmacy function because of medication error issues within those provinces.

SALARY MARKET CONDITIONS: *(Employers were asked to identify situations where their salary levels are lower than other employers that they would expect to recruit employees from or other employers that recruit their employees. This may be local, provincial, regional, national or international depending on the occupation group and traditional recruitment relationships. Cost of living considerations may or may not be appropriate to factor into market salary comparisons).*

The competitive market for Pharmacists continues to be strong across Canada and North America particularly in the retail sector. The current rate of pay for Pharmacists employed by Saskatchewan health regions is \$36.00/hour at the top step.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

Considering the labour market criteria under the provincial framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee makes the following conclusions:

- There continues to be improvement to service delivery issues.
- Vacancy rates have declined to 5.1% (full time positions) since the last Pharmacists report by the Market Supplement Review Committee in October 2003.
- Most regions have maintained on-going recruitment efforts for the Pharmacist classification as they recognize the competitiveness of this occupation.

Having reviewed the information as provided by employers and considering the labour market criteria, the Market Supplement Review Committee recommends:

- To maintain the current temporary market supplement for the Pharmacist classification.

APPENDIX A

Market Supplement Consideration Request – Pharmacist

Employer Respondents

1. Cypress
2. Five Hills
3. Heartland
4. Kelsey Trail
5. Prairie North
6. Prince Albert Parkland
7. Regina Qu'Appelle
8. Saskatoon
9. Sun Country
10. Sunrise