



MANITOBA INSTITUTE
FOR PATIENT SAFETY

Make It Personal: Interview Series

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An Interview with Ronald Guse

Ronald Guse is a pharmacist and the former Registrar with the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba. He was one of the first board members of the Manitoba Institute of Patient Safety and is now the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute. "The patient safety statistics in Canada are terrible," he says. "We need to realize we are all part of this system and work together to improve this. Wouldn't it be great to have a health care system where patient safety was guaranteed?"



To Err is Human

One of Ron's first roles working directly with patient safety was as the complaint investigator for the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba*. In this role he learned about the importance of acknowledging that to err is human, and because of this, we need to design systems that eliminate the risk of error. Ron explains, "Patient safety shouldn't be crisis driven – it should be about identifying a system change that is important to make proactively." But we also need to attend to errors to identify ways to improve the system. To promote this thinking in pharmacy, the College of Pharmacists requires that pharmacies not only document errors, but also document the changes made to ensure the same error will not happen again.

The Power of Apology

Ron thinks that one of the break-through moments for patient safety in Manitoba has been the Apology Act. This legislation allows health care providers to apologize without any legal ramification based on the apology. Ron says, "People who have been affected by errors want acknowledgement, to know what happened, to know that things are being in place to make sure it doesn't happen again, and they want an apology. This act allows that apology to happen, and it benefits both the patient and the provider."

Ron brought up a really interesting point about how we rarely talk about the impact of a medical error on the health care provider or the organization that made the error. This is now known as the 'second victim'. Ron says, "It is traumatic on the provider when they learn an



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error has occurred. And right after they learn about it, they continue working – but are they really in a good position to be working right in that moment? They may lose their focus and confidence in themselves – and confidence is important to be competent. So while it is important for everyone involved in the error to review and take some responsibility, we need to support providers that may now be experiencing guilt, and a loss of confidence.”

Patient Safety Right Now

Patient Safety Right Now is the new slogan of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute. One way that Ron believes we can achieve this is by making sure that patient safety is front and center in all conversations and documents in health care. “It’s a simple term that we assume everyone supports. The more we hear that term, the more we make sure it is always front and center in everyone’s minds. Patient safety should be included in all contracts, legislation, and policy. That will make certain that everyone is accountable to ensuring patient safety.

Speak Up!

Ron also teaches in the pharmacy program at the University of Manitoba. The advice he gives to his students is the same he gives to patients and experienced practitioners: Be aware of your environment, aware of your surroundings, and if you see something that doesn’t seem right, then speak up! “New graduates often feel like they are not empowered to speak up or to make changes. But any professional, regardless of their years of experience, needs to speak up if they see something that could cause an error. Don’t wait for something to happen and do it after the fact.”

Ron believes that change will come if patients and providers support each other to speak up. “Even I as a health care professional I can feel intimidated when in the position of being a patient, and so I’m sure a lot of people feel that way. We need to create an environment where the patient feels empowered to speak up.”

The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation established in 2004 to promote and coordinate activities that improve patient safety and enhance quality healthcare in Manitoba.

Written by Cara Brown, MIPS Volunteer and Assistant Professor, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, College of Rehabilitation Sciences

*see [interview with Susan Lessard-Friesen](#) to learn about the role of the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba

Related Resources:

- Trailer for the movie “To Err is Human”: <https://www.toerrishumanfilm.com/>
- Patient video stories at the Canadian Patient Safety Institute website: <https://www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca>