

The Accreditation Process for Pharmaceutical Sales Professionals

The Council for Continuing Pharmaceutical Education (CCPE) details the history, process and benefits of the accreditation process

Talking with Marc Lalonde, CCPE General Manager

Historical background

Back in the days when promoting drugs was just a sales job, there was a wide discrepancy in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. In the late 1960s, a number of pharmaceutical executives and owners made a commitment to elevate the job to the rank of profession.

In 1969, the Council for Accredited Pharmaceutical Manufacturer Representatives (APMR) was created by members of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada (PMAC). These organizations are now respectively known as CCPE and Rx&D.

The task was to develop a learning program that would provide basic and common knowledge to everyone. The first standard was created for what is now known as the pharmaceutical sales professional.

In 1971, the first accreditation exam was offered to the 500 representatives in Canada. CCPE has since accredited nearly 15,000 professionals.

Why do we need an accreditation process?

With only 60% of current pharmaceutical sales representatives having a university degree in science, the background of the

6,700 representatives working in the Canadian pharmaceutical community is not uniform.

Every profession has an accreditation process to ensure that members meet minimal standards in their field. Since there is no recognized academic program that specifically prepares individuals to become pharmaceutical sales representatives, the accreditation is the official way to ensure that standards are met. There must be common knowledge of:

- human anatomy,
- physiology and pathophysiology and
- pharmacological treatments.

While you may be a credible expert in your drug and disease area, you may have little of value to offer a healthcare professional facing other conditions and challenges. Healthcare professionals expect to meet credible, well-trained, competent pharmaceutical consultants.

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How do you benefit from being accredited?

An accredited representative:

- Is a proud member of an important profession
- Has earned professional recognition
- Meets basic credibility requirements
- Is competitive and employable

Who should be accredited?

The answer is simple: anyone who wants to be a pharmaceutical sales professional. Think of your accountant, real estate agent, electrician, financial planner, lawyer and all the healthcare professionals we call on. They have all trained and successfully earned their professional status through an accreditation process.

Since May 1993, Rx&D's Code of Conduct prescribes that to ensure professional standards for the pharmaceutical community, representatives must pass the accreditation course offered by the CCPE within two years of their employment.

What is accreditation?

It is the process of documenting your basic knowledge and comprehension and your ability to apply the information in pharmaceutical practice. As an accredited representative you have earned the right to put CCPE next to your name.

You receive a certificate and can proudly wear the colourful accreditation pin.

What is new with accreditation?

The content of the accreditation course has been split in two distinct units and, starting in May 2007, there will be two separate exams.

Since many individuals have specific needs based on their background or role in a pharmaceutical organization, participants can now order each unit separately.

Where do I go to become accredited?

You don't have to go anywhere! The accreditation process involves self-paced distance learning and an internet-hosted exam. The study materials and the certificate will be sent to you by courier.

Table 1

Accreditation: Table of Contents

Unit 1: Anatomy and Physiology

Module 1:	General Introduction
Module 2:	The Nervous System
Module 3:	Special Sensory: Eye, Ear
Module 4:	The Cardiovascular System
Module 5:	The Respiratory System
Module 6:	The Gastrointestinal System
Module 7:	The Urinary System
Module 8:	The Endocrine System
Module 9:	The Reproductive System
Module 10:	The Musculoskeletal System
Module 11:	The Integumentary (Skin) System
Module 12:	The Immune System and Infectious Diseases
Module 13:	Additional Topics

Unit 2: Pathophysiology and Pharmacology

Module 1:	Basic Principles of Pharmacology
Module 2:	The Nervous System
Module 3:	Special Sensory: Eye, Ear
Module 4:	The Cardiovascular System
Module 5:	The Respiratory System
Module 6:	The Gastrointestinal System
Module 7:	The Urinary System
Module 8:	The Endocrine System
Module 9:	The Reproductive System
Module 10:	The Musculoskeletal System
Module 11:	The Integumentary (Skin) System
Module 12:	The Immune System and Infectious Diseases
Module 13:	Cancer Therapy

When can I become accredited?

You can complete a registration form any day of the year. Study material will be delivered within a week and exams are available on the first Friday of each month. Some people have completed the accreditation within two months. Starting in May 2007, the accreditation process can be completed with two separate exams, so you can focus on only one unit at a time.

Some reasons you may be avoiding accreditation and what you need to know

- **I am not working for an Rx&D organization.**
 Rx&D made accreditation mandatory in 1993 and it has been included in the Code of Conduct¹ since that time. Even if you are not working for an Rx&D organization, in the public's eye there is only one set of standards. The official recognition process for pharmaceutical sales professionals is the CCPE accreditation course. Being a pharmaceutical sales representative used to be a job. It has evolved into a profession. Accreditation elevates you to the level of pharmaceutical professional.
- **My employer does not require it.**
 In this case what standard do you follow? Stakeholders expect a single standard for pharmaceutical professionals. With accreditation, you receive the respect that 15,000 professionals have received since 1971. Even if your standards are superior to CCPE accreditation, you will need to document them.

- **I'm not motivated to invest the effort to complete the accreditation course.**
 This is currently the only standard across the pharmaceutical community and standards are required to earn the respect of our stakeholders. Imagine what would happen if physicians were allowed to practice without completing their studies and being accredited by the College of Physicians! Would you expect a healthcare professional to trust you if you weren't accredited?
- **Is it really mandatory?**
 You may feel that you have no say in this process. However, every profession is regulated by standards, exams, audits and other processes. When we deal with people's health there is very little room for improvisation. What we do as pharmaceutical professionals has a big impact on the health of Canadians. Let's be passionately proud of what we do and make a difference. **CPM**

Reference
 1. Section 8.2.3 of Rx&Ds Code of Conduct.

Announcement

Paul Levesque appointed President and CEO of Pfizer Canada Pharmaceutical Operations



Paul Lévesque,
 President and CEO,
 Pfizer Canada
 Pharmaceutical
 Operations

Pfizer Inc. is pleased to announce the appointment of Paul Lévesque as President and CEO of Pfizer Canada Pharmaceutical Operations.

Paul Lévesque has returned home to Pfizer Canada. After five years in Paris heading the marketing division for Pfizer in France, he is back in his native Quebec to take over the reins of the company he first joined in 1992.

Mr. Lévesque has spent his entire 22-year professional career in the pharmaceutical industry. He was raised in Quebec City and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biochemistry from Laval University. He later earned a Diploma in Management from McGill University in Montreal. He is pleased to be involved again in the issues and opportunities facing the industry within the complex healthcare environment in Canada. He knows the great need to communicate the value that the industry brings to the Canadian economy, the Canadian research and medical communities and, most of all, to Canadian patients.