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student-operated newsletter publication by the
St. John's University College of Pharmacy and
Health Sciences Rho Chi Beta Delta chapter**



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The Society seeks universal recognition of its members as lifelong intellectual leaders in Pharmacy, and as a community of scholars, to instill the desire to pursue intellectual excellence and critical inquiry to advance the profession.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u><i>Bridging medicine and technology: FDA approves first digital inhaler</i></u> By: Michael Lim, PharmD Candidate c/o 2020	5
<u><i>Epilepsy, children, and how the pharmacist can play a vital role in patient care</i></u> By: Evanthia Siozios, PharmD Candidate c/o 2020	7
<u><i>The “Netflix” approach to hepatitis C drugs</i></u> By: Michael Lim, PharmD Candidate c/o 2020	8
<u>Team Members</u>	10
<u>Back Cover</u>	13

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

By: Judy Koag, Graphics Editor



Bridging medicine and technology: FDA approves first digital inhaler

By: Michael Lim, PharmD Candidate c/o 2020

As modern technology continues to grow ever more complex and powerful, it is no surprise that the healthcare industry is constantly searching for medical applications of the latest technological advancements. Whether it be new health system software or medical devices for at home testing, the integration of medicine and technology has been essential for enhancing and streamlining patient care. December 2018 marked another milestone for the consolidation of medicine and technology with the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approval of the first digital inhaler. While separate attachable sensor technology for inhalers is available worldwide, this approval marks the introduction of the sole digital inhaler containing built-in technology to the global market.

Teva's ProAir® Digihaler™ (albuterol sulfate 117 mcg) Inhalation Powder is the first and only digital inhaler approved for use in the United States (U.S.). Equipped with built-in sensors that capture inhaler use data, the digital inhaler connects to a companion mobile application to provide asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) patients with the recorded information. The sensors can detect when the inhaler is used and measure inspiratory flow.¹ According to Sven Dethlefs, Teva's Executive Vice President in Global Marketing and Portfolio, the device, "provides patients with data on their inhaler use, which may help them have a more informed dialogue with their healthcare provider regarding their asthma or COPD management."¹ Furthermore, from a healthcare professional's perspective, being able to study a patient's inhaler use data may be helpful in identifying issues such as

incorrect inhaler use or a pattern of frequent use indicating the need for better asthma control.

Structurally, the ProAir® Digihaler™ closely resembles other metered dose inhalers with its familiar mouthpiece, cap, dose counter, and vent. However, it distinguishes itself from other inhalers due to its electronic feature. Built into the top of the inhaler is an electronic module that records and stores information about inhaler events. The module then sends the information wirelessly to the patient's mobile application.²

Similar to the ProAir RespiClick®, the digital inhaler does not require priming.² In fact, the digital inhaler is used essentially according to the same directions as the RespiClick®. First, the inhaler's cap is opened fully until a "click" is felt and heard. This loads the dose. The patient then exhales as much air from their lungs as possible prior to placing his or her lips over the mouthpiece. With their mouth covering the mouthpiece, a quick and deep inhalation delivers the dose as the patient holds their breath for about ten seconds before exhaling. Finally, the cap is closed to cover the mouthpiece.² The inhaler does not require routine maintenance.³ However, the mouthpiece may be wiped with a dry cloth.³

Currently, the ProAir® Digihaler™ is indicated for the treatment or prevention of bronchospasm in patients four years of age and older with reversible obstructive airway disease and for the prevention of exercise-induced bronchospasm in patients aged four and older.⁴ Furthermore, while compatibility with a mobile app is the product's defining feature, connection to the app is not required to use the inhaler itself as the electronic

components do not control or interfere with medication delivery.⁴ Each inhaler contains 200 inhalation doses and may be used for up to thirteen months before expiring.³

Common side effects of the digital inhaler include back pain, oropharyngeal pain, and sinus headache. As with other albuterol inhalers, use should be discontinued with the occurrence of life-threatening paradoxical bronchospasm and resumed with an alternative agent such as levalbuterol tartrate (Xopenex HFA®).³ In regard to patient counseling, the digital inhaler appears to present an interesting situation in which pharmacists would counsel on not only proper inhaler technique but also on using the companion mobile application.

Like Abilify MyCite® (aripiprazole), a tablet that uses sensor technology which was approved in November 2017, Proair® Digihaler™ represents one of the few digital or “smart” medications available on the U.S. market. Moving forward, it will be interesting to see whether these medical innovations make a meaningful impact on the nature of pharmacologic therapy or conversely prove to be nothing more than trivial and expensive electronic accessories. After all, there is no current evidence of improved clinical outcomes associated with use of the inhaler’s mobile application.³ Regardless of the outcome, this integration of medicine and technology holds exciting possibilities for the future of pharmacy and patient care. The digital inhaler will be available in 2019 through a number of “Early Experience” Programs with a national launch planned for 2020.⁵

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Epilepsy, children, and how the pharmacist can play a vital role in patient care

By: Evanthia Siozios, PharmD Candidate c/o 2020

A diagnosis of epilepsy requires either two unprovoked seizures or one unprovoked seizure with the possibility of having more.¹ These seizures are not usually caused by factors such as alcohol withdrawal or hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Missing doses of seizure medication is the most common cause of breakthrough seizures making pharmacist intervention and consultation crucial in achieving proper seizure control.

A study conducted at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in the Division of Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Psychology by post-doctoral fellow Ana M. Gutierrez-Colina, PhD, and colleagues, demonstrated barriers in pediatric epilepsy where pharmacist interventions can make a difference in a patient's overall quality of life.² Difficulty swallowing medications, forgetfulness, and refusal to take medications as prescribed has been associated with non-adherence in children with epilepsy. In order to determine the most common causes of non-adherence, descriptive statistical methods including means, standard deviations and percentages were used. Frequency of non-adherence was calculated across four age groups - preschool (2-5 years) and school-aged (6-12 years) children, adolescents (13-17 years), and young adults (18-25 years). "Dislike taste" and "caregiver forgetfulness" were found to be the two most common reasons preschool and school-aged children were non-adherent to their medications. These two barriers to adherence can be circumvented with pharmacist interventions in outpatient and inpatient settings. Pharmacists can flavor liquids to increase appeal in younger children and counsel caregivers to create reminders such as alarms on cellphones of medication administration times.

An educational intervention conducted in a specialist outpatient clinic at KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) in Singapore by Chunliang Chen, BScPharm and colleagues, demonstrated the impact of pharmacist counseling

on the caregivers of pediatric epilepsy patients.³ In this intervention, pharmacists worked with neurologists to personalize counseling for patients by educating the caregivers on epilepsy and medication administration. Patients and caregivers first consulted with the neurologist and then went to a separate room to be counseled by the pharmacist which collectively took sixty minutes. Two weeks later, the pharmacist followed up with the caregiver over the phone to inquire about patient compliance, side effects, and characteristics of the seizures, if any occurred. Overall, this study proved that educational counseling by a pharmacist is effective at improving caregiver confidence in administering antiepileptic drugs, leading to better compliance in the care of their child.

The way pharmacists provide patient care can vary but their contributions are ultimately very important when treating epileptic pediatric patients. Whether it involves flavoring a child's medication or counseling the child's caregiver to improve adherence, there is a strong need for pharmacists in improving health related outcomes of patients with epilepsy, a chronic disorder that can simply be provoked when medications are not taken as directed.

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The “Netflix” approach to hepatitis C drugs

By: Michael Lim, PharmD Candidate c/o 2020

In a February 2019 Senate Finance Committee hearing, executives from major pharmaceutical companies including AbbVie, Merck, and AstraZeneca were criticized for the high cost of brand-name prescription drugs.¹ When asked why brand-name prescription drugs in the United States were more expensive compared to other developed countries, an acceptable explanation was not provided.

The astronomic cost of healthcare in the United States is not a new issue. However, it is important to note that the treatment of some disease states proves costlier than others. One disease state saturated with expense is Hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is a viral infection of the liver caused by the blood-borne Hepatitis C virus.² Often transmitted through needle sharing, Hepatitis C is a short-term infection but becomes chronic in 70 to 85 percent of individuals.² While treatment is selected based on individual patient genotypes, frequently used curative treatments that achieve a sustained virologic response, such as sofosbuvir (Sovaldi®) and ledipasvir/sofosbuvir (Harvoni®), come with the financial strain of costing 84,000 dollars and 94,500 dollars respectively for a twelve week regimen.³ In response to these lofty prices, an interesting payment model resembling the streaming service Netflix has emerged in Australia, Louisiana, and Washington.

According to the “Netflix” model, a state would form a partnership with one or more drug companies for unrestricted access to its Hepatitis C drugs.⁴ Similar to how Netflix offers consumers unlimited streaming of movies and TV shows for a flat subscription fee each month, the “Netflix” approach to drug availability would allow a state to purchase an unlimited amount of medi-

cation from a drug company at a fixed cost. This approach would prove beneficial from a state budget-planning standpoint while also expanding patient access to curative medications.⁴ For example, in Louisiana, one of the states pursuing this new drug procurement model, the unimpeded access to such drugs would cure an estimated 39,000 people in the state’s Medicaid and prison systems.⁴ In addition, the “Netflix” model proves to have garnered industry support with AbbVie, Gilead Sciences, and Merck all submitting bids for the proposal.⁴ The “Netflix” model relies on a concept known as delinkage. Delinkage refers to a pricing scheme that separates the reward for pharmaceutical innovation from a drug’s price.⁵ In the case of the “Netflix” model, the reward for innovation comes in the form of a large fixed payment rather than simply selling the drugs at a high price on an individual basis. According to Louisiana’s secretary of health, Dr. Rebekah Gee, MD, the state hoped to form contracts with one or more of these companies and start obtaining medications by July 2019.⁵ In Washington, a Netflix-style subscription payment model is also being pursued albeit on a larger scale. Washington’s deal proposes paying a flat fee for unrestricted access to Hepatitis C drugs across four state agencies including Medicaid beneficiaries, prisoners, and employees covered by the state health plan.⁶

Taking more lives in the United States than all other infectious diseases combined, Hepatitis C poses a dangerous and apparent threat.⁵ However, despite the debut of novel curative medications, only 450,000 people or fifteen percent of Americans with Hepatitis C have been treated.⁵ The “Netflix” model offers a cost-effective approach for the treatment of Hepatitis C and

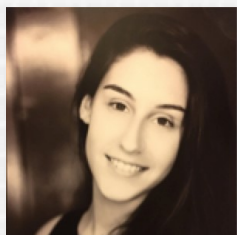
its success has already been proven outside of the United States, namely in Australia. A one billion Australian dollar (766 million U.S. dollar) agreement with Hepatitis C drug producers Gilead, AbbVie, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Merck allowing the country access to all the Hepatitis C drugs it can use for five years has led to improvements in the treatment of the disease.⁵ According to a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* conducted by Dr. Suerie Moon, PhD, MPA, of Harvard University and Elise Erickson, M.A., the agreement has allowed the country to treat seven times as many Hepatitis C patients than it would have without the agreement.^{5,7} Additionally, the government would have to spend 6.42 billion Australian dollars (4.92 billion U.S. dollars) more in order to treat this same number of patients.⁷

Given that this is a communicable disease, a strong public health interest exists in treating as many Hepatitis C patients as possible. Moving forward, it will be interesting to see how these Netflix-style deals progress in Louisiana and Washington and whether the results in Australia can be replicated in the US. Furthermore, it remains questionable whether or not other states will follow suit. From a pharmacy perspective, success with these agreements would mean not only expanded access to Hepatitis C medications among various patient populations but also increased pharmacist responsibility in ensuring that the drugs are used in a safe and efficacious manner. Success with adapting the “Netflix” business model could also open consideration to applying the scheme to other medications and disease states.⁵ For example, naloxone (Narcan®), insulin, and HIV treatments may be candidates for this payment model.⁵ The “Netflix” model offers a creative new approach to the high cost of Hepatitis C drugs and the future of this strategy presents exciting possibilities for addressing the cost of healthcare in the United States.

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RHO CHI POST: TEAM MEMBERS



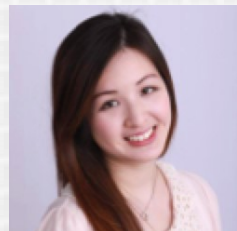
@ Anna Diyamandoglu
6th Year, STJ; Editor-in-Chief

Throughout my time in the PharmD program, my understanding of pharmacy as a profession has evolved and deepened as much as my desire to create awareness, particularly to non-science students, about the diverse role pharmacy plays in various healthcare and non-healthcare settings. I have always had an affinity for writing and look forward to combining my interests in literary composition, editing and pharmacy to produce relevant issues which both pharmacy students and non-pharmacy students alike will find relatable and take an interest in.



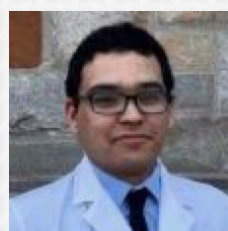
@ Shireen Farzadeh, PharmD
Graduate Copy Editor [Content-Focused]

I am excited to join Rho Chi Post and contribute to the award-winning newsletter for students to share ideas, opinions, and pertinent topics! Writing for the Rho Chi Post is an opportunity to express our appreciation for pharmacy and educate ourselves and our peers. I hope to inspire students to discover their passion for writing and to stay up to date on our evolving profession!



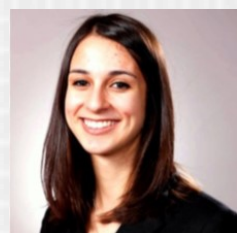
@ Karen Lin, PharmD
Graduate Copy Editor [Content-Focused]

The Rho Chi Post allows me to have an appreciation for interactive pharmacy learning as well as the art of writing. With each newsletter, my goal is to provide current information to readers who come across the Post. As an editor, I hope to make the newsletter one-of-a-kind and motivate and influence writers to explore science with their creative talents.



@ Jonathan Mercado, PharmD
Graduate Copy Editor [Content-Focused]

The Rho Chi Post breaks barriers for students that want a glimpse of their future and acts as an inspiration to work harder to achieve their goals. It is an embodiment of the motivation and intelligence that drives pharmacy students to be the most informed and capable professionals they can be. I am glad to a part of that mission and to channel my passion and interests through this newsletter.



@ Nicollette Pacheco, PharmD
Graduate Editor [Graphics-Focused]

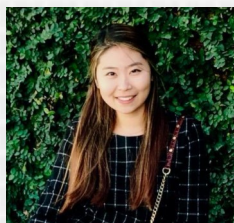
As a member of the Rho Chi Post team, I have a vast appreciation of what it means to be a pharmacist in the rapidly evolving world of healthcare. As a graduate editor, I will continue to bring my passion for science and creativity to the Rho Chi Post.



@ Joseph Eskandrous, PharmD
Graduate Staff Writer

In the world of pharmacy, knowledge becomes outdated within hours of when you learned it. The miracle drug that used to be considered the standard of therapy is replaced by the latest and greatest. My role as a Staff Writer for the Rho Chi Post is to bring these changes to the forefront in order to empower future pharmacists and to improve the quality of patient care.

RHO CHI POST: TEAM MEMBERS



@ Judy Koag

5th Year, STJ; Copy Editor [Graphics-Focused]

I am so excited to join the Rho Chi Post, a newsletter which strives to create high quality and creative content. I look forward to working with the team to promote the profession of pharmacy and communicate ideas that inspire and attract readers through the use of graphic design. Graphic design has always been my passion and I hope my contributions continue the Rho Chi Post's mission.



@ Obaid Zia

6th Year, STJ; Copy Editor [Graphics-Focused]

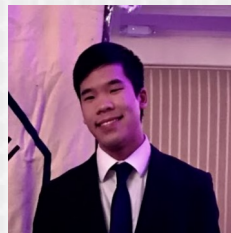
I am honored to be a part of the Rho Chi Post team. I see so much potential and value in having this kind of student-driven platform available to a nationwide community of pharmacists and student pharmacists. I'm excited to help take RCP in a new direction better suited for our contemporary needs and aesthetics.



@ Oudit Balkaran

5th Year, STJ; Social Media Manager & Website Liaison

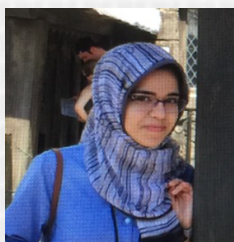
The Rho Chi Post is not only a great way for students to voice their opinions, but also a great way for them to continue expanding their knowledge of pharmacy. Today's news becomes old news very rapidly in the ever-changing world of pharmacy. Though my involvement in Rho Chi Post, I hope to help students learn and motivate them to take a deeper dive into the vast world of pharmacy. It is crucial we stay on top of our knowledge as future pharmacists. By doing so, we can maximize our abilities to help our patients.



@ Adrian Wong

5th Year, STJ; Finance & Outreach Manager

As future "drug experts", I believe it is our responsibility to keep up to date with the ever-changing and dynamic world that is pharmacy. The Rho Chi Post provides a unique platform for students to stay well informed on current healthcare related events, as well as fine-tune their writing skills--both of which are essential for being a successful pharmacist. I am excited for the privilege to work alongside the editorial board to produce a newsletter that can be appreciated by everyone!



@ Sarah Hewady

6th Year, STJ; Staff Editor

The importance of staying updated on relevant healthcare matters cannot be overstated. I appreciate the mission of Rho Chi Post in that it successfully compiles clinically relevant and up-to-date information for its audience. Wanting to contribute to this cause is what sparked my interest to become a staff editor. I hope to broaden the scope of knowledge of the public as well as aid healthcare practitioners in the clinical decision-making process.



@ Kathleen Horan

6th Year, STJ; Staff Editor

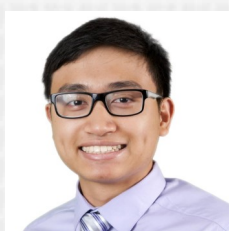
I have always loved writing, and I hope to couple my passion for writing with my interest in clinical pharmacy by becoming a writer and staff editor for the Rho Chi Post. As a writer and staff editor for the Rho Chi Post, I hope to write and edit informative and interesting articles that relate to the world of healthcare and pharmacy. I am so excited to join this team of student pharmacists and writers.

RHO CHI POST: TEAM MEMBERS



@ Katharine Russo
5th Year, STJ; Staff Editor

In my first two years as a pharmacy student, I was exposed to numerous opportunities to write medical based articles for classes and clubs. This is what first sparked my interest in health care literature and I look forward to being a Staff Writer for the Rho Chi Post in hopes of being able to share my passion and enthusiasm in writing health-care related publications.



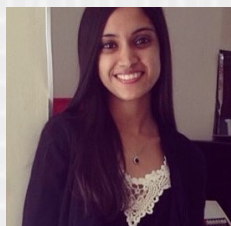
@ Michael Lim
6th Year, STJ; Staff Writer

In the spirit of advancing the pharmacy profession, the Rho Chi Post never ceases to produce valuable content showcasing the innovation and diversity of the career. As a Staff Writer for the Post, I am honored to have the opportunity to use writing to both educate and push readers to strive for excellence in their professional pursuits. I hope that my contributions to the newsletter are able to foster growth in an informative and accessible manner.



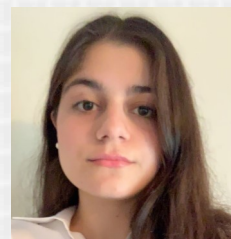
@ Mah Noor
5th Year, STJ; Staff Writer

Rho Chi Post is an amazing student-operated newsletter publication that is doing an astonishing job delivering updated news as well as giving students the opportunity to give back to the pharmacy community. As a staff writer, I hope to play a key role in educating students on the different aspects of pharmacy and how much growth takes place in this field. Reading the Post since freshman year has helped me gain a better understanding of what it means to be a pharmacist and I hope to achieve that same understanding in students who read my articles.



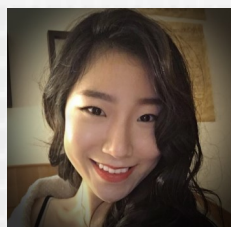
@ Shivani Shah
5th Year, STJ; Staff Writer

As students in an dynamic healthcare profession, it is important to keep up to date with literature and publications regarding the pharmacy profession. Rho Chi Post serves as a great outlet for students to catch up on pharmaceutical innovations and progress going on in the career. Being a staff writer motivates me to constantly research and share new, exciting advancements with fellow students. I look forward to reading articles in the Post and hope to spark others curiosity and interest!



@ Evanthia Siozios
6th Year, STJ; Staff Writer

Rho Chi Post is a newsletter that gives students the opportunity to learn and write about novel topics and broaden their knowledge while demonstrating their writing skills. For me, being involved with this newsletter is not just about learning something new but also sharing relevant topics which have an impact on patients' lives. I have learned so much from writing for the Rho Chi Post and hope to inspire others with my words. As a future pharmacist I want to learn to teach and get to give.



@ Yeonah Suk
6th Year, STJ; Staff Writer

As a student interested in various branches of healthcare, the Rho Chi Post has provided me the opportunity to be part of an organization that discusses this field in a broad scope. As modern society continues to amalgamate and globalize multiple disciplines, it is important that we harmonize these elements and keep ourselves updated on their interactions. I joined the Rho Chi Post to both learn and contribute to a team that has immense diversity and my goal is to continue exploring innovative ideas through writing.

MISSION

The Rho Chi Post is an award-winning, monthly, electronic, student-operated, faculty-approved publication that aims to promote the pharmacy profession through creativity and effective communication. Our publication is a profound platform for integrating ideas, opinions, and innovations from students, faculty, and administrators.

VISION

The Rho Chi Post aims to become the most exciting and creative student-operated newsletter within St. John's University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

Our newsletter continues to be known for its relatable and useful content

Our editorial team continues to be known for its excellence and professionalism

The Rho Chi Post essentially sets the stage for the future of student-operated publications in pharmacy

VALUES

Opportunity

Teamwork

Respect

Excellence

GOALS

To provide the highest quality student-operated newsletter with accurate information

To maintain a healthy, respectful, challenging, and rewarding environment for student editors

To cultivate sound relationships with other organizations and individuals who are like-minded and involved in like pursuits

To have a strong, positive impact on fellow students, faculty, and administrators

To contribute ideas and innovations to the Pharmacy profession