



BULLETIN

Dean Elbe, Pharmacist

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IS IT POSSIBLE TO STAND UP FOR YOUR PROFESSION USING 140 CHARACTERS OR LESS?

HSA member Dr. Dean Elbe says, -Yes, absolutely." Elbe, a Clinical Pharmacist at BC Childrens Hospitals Child and Adolescent Mental Health Program, used his Twitter account to help HSA galvanize opposition to a proposed 14 per cent rollback in pharmacists salaries earlier this year.

The BC government had announced they were canceling a salary adjustment that, since 2006, has been offered to hospital pharmacists as a recruitment incentive ... a means of addressing critical shortages of pharmacists around BC. So as well as cutting most pharmacists incomes, this would have left the problem of vacant pharmacist positions unsolved.

-Pharmacists are generally not that political," says Elbe, -But this got our attention and awakened the sleeping giant."

For Elbe, that meant using social media. And while it can be hard to explain complicated issues within Twitters 140 character limit, he jumped at the challenge.

-I hang out at the intersection of information technology and pharmacy," explains Elbe, referring to his extensive background in communications and technology. Earlier in his career he was the Pharmacy Information Systems Coordinator at VGH, and his PharmD (Doctor of Pharmacy) project focussed on communication. As well, he has been doing website design and creating web-based health initiatives for several years, including running his own company, MediaPharm, which produces health information podcasts.

Elbe started using Twitter a few years ago and began tweeting about the proposed rollbacks the moment he heard about them. A few simple words " for instance, "...will worsen shortages, put patients at risk of serious drug effects..." " and links to an HSA-sponsored petition proved highly effective.

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