

The RxFiles

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PROGRAM SUMMARY

The process of selecting *the most optimal* drug therapy for a given patient is often complex, requiring extensive, and time-consuming research. *The RxFiles* Academic Detailing Program seeks to assist physicians, pharmacists and other health care professionals in getting excellent and objective drug information into practice.

Goals of the Program

- ◆ To provide objective, current, and unbiased drug information to physicians
- ◆ To enhance patient care
- ◆ To encourage the use of therapeutically equivalent, less costly medications when appropriate

Program Features

Drug therapy topics are selected on the basis of their potential to enhance patient care and/or reduce drug costs without altering the efficacy and safety of drug therapy. Family physician input and regional drug utilization data or observations assist in choosing relevant and timely topics.

The program's clinical pharmacists, in consultation with medical and pharmacy specialists provide comparative and objective drug information in selected therapeutic areas. The information is disseminated to physicians through:

- ◆ **Newsletter Publication** - *The RxFiles* summarizes key therapeutic points and compares relative efficacy, safety, and cost. Therapeutic selection tables and summary recommendations are included for quick reference. Newsletter materials are also available on the *RxFiles* website.
- ◆ **Office visits** - *academic detailing* sessions are scheduled on a voluntary basis with physicians. Visits of approximately 15-20 minutes cover newsletter highlights and specific questions related to the topic. Brief, one to one discussions have been suggested as one of the most effective educational strategies for practicing physicians (Can Med Assoc J. 1996; 154 (7), 1013-1017).
- ◆ **Email and Website Updates** - which include updated charts and Question and Answer (Q&A) Summaries arising from visits. Accessible on the internet: www.RxFiles.ca
- ◆ **RxFiles Drug Comparison Charts in PALM Format** – for use on PALM/PDA handhelds.

Strengths of the Program

- ◆ **Physician autonomy and flexibility** in prescribing are maintained
- ◆ Participation is **voluntary** and time commitment is minimal (~20 minutes, 3 times per year)
- ◆ **Interactive** environment provides opportunity for physicians to ask questions
- ◆ **Comparative** drug information fills the void left by non-comparative/non-objective sources
- ◆ **Objective, unbiased, and up to date** information is valuable in evaluating drug information obtained from commercial/industry sources
- ◆ Information is **pertinent** to drug therapy issues, availability and costs in Saskatchewan, Canada
- ◆ **Potential cost considerations** benefit both the patient and the health care system
- ◆ **Proactive, non-restrictive approach** offers an attractive option for providing drug information

Program Development to Date

Over 300 Saskatchewan family physicians are participating in the program. Feedback on both the newsletter and the visits has been very positive. Data from physician surveys have shown that the program has been well received and changes in early drug utilization trends demonstrated an impact on prescribing. Program materials and presentations are also being utilized by the FM residents, Northern Medical Services, the Colleges of Pharmacy and Nutrition, Medicine, and Pharmacology at the University of Saskatchewan, and physicians and nurses involved in continuing education. An internet site and email service is also available for interested physicians and other health care providers.

In addition to disseminating good information, the program has served as an excellent bridge between physicians and pharmacists. This effort is a valuable step towards the goal of providing "optimal drug therapy" to the people of Saskatchewan.

Program Expansion

Program expansion is ongoing and the service is being offered to several areas including Regina, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Meadow Lake, Melfort, Nipawin, the Southwest, and the Midwest Health District. The expansion process involves discussing the program with physicians and pharmacists in the center, identifying local physician advisor(s), recruiting and training a suitable academic detailer and pilot implementation and evaluation of the program. The program seeks to provide excellent, objective, and practical drug information with "grass roots" physician support and participation in the program development process.

Other Activities

In addition to the publication of materials and academic detailing, the RxFiles also provides a number of other drug information and education services upon request.

- ◆ **Special Education Sessions** related to RxFiles topics are presented to pharmacy students, medical residents, professional conferences, public information events, nurses and nursing educators, prescribers in northern Saskatchewan, and retail/hospital pharmacists.

- ◆ **New Physician RxFiles Orientation** is provided for most physicians new to Saskatchewan. Physicians are given an overview of program materials (e.g. comparison charts) that may be especially useful in getting orientated to drug therapy matters. They also receive information on the Saskatchewan Drug Information Service, and the Saskatchewan Prescription Drug Plan.

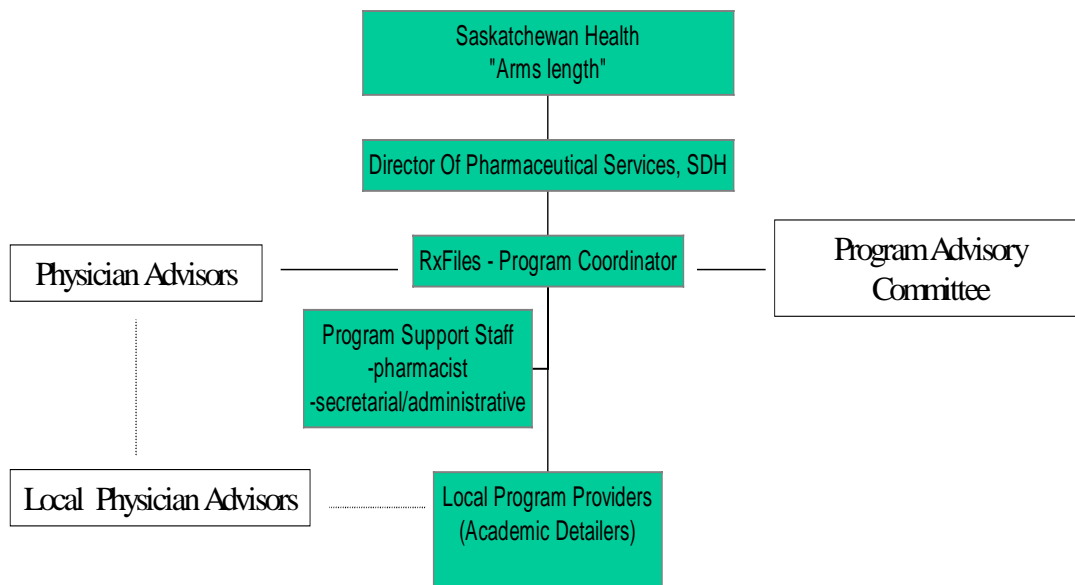
- ◆ **RxFiles Binders** with previous newsletter issues is available to Saskatchewan health professionals.

- ◆ The program may also assist with the various related **projects and working groups**.

- ◆ Comparison charts are also available for **PALM handheld** PDA devices in **format**.

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Organizational Structure



- ◆ **Saskatchewan Health:** provides annual grant to fund program; has one representative sit on program advisory committee
- ◆ **Director of Pharmaceutical Services, SDH:** provides administrative direction and support for program (contract, financial, planning)
- ◆ **RxFiles Program Coordinator:** coordinates overall program development and operation; trains and supervises academic detailers; oversees development/review process for material development; develops methods for program evaluation; participation in research.
- ◆ **Program Support Staff:** *pharmacist* support staff assist with research and development of materials and provision of academic detailing; *secretarial/administrative* support staff assist with financial record keeping, newsletter publication and mailing, booking of visits and events, data keeping and various other support functions.
- ◆ **Local Program Providers:** academic detailers from the expansion centers who provide drug information, education, and academic detailing to physicians, pharmacists and other health professionals in their area.
- ◆ **Program Advisory Committee:** provides guidance to the Program Coordinator for ongoing program and materials development.
- ◆ **Physician Advisors:** provide physician input into materials as they are developed; provide ideas, support and physician viewpoint for program development.
- ◆ **Local Physician Advisors:** provide input, ideas, support and feedback regarding local implementation of the program; provide liaison between the academic detailer and physician community in their area.