

2014 NPPA Conference Review, Part 1

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Returning to the "mecca" of Pharmacy Procurement Education, professional pharmacy buyers and directors from across the country made their annual trek to the Nevada desert for NPPA's latest Conference. An impressive 285 total Attendees (254 Pharmacy Attendees and 19 GPO Attendees), as well as an Exhibit Room-busting 87 Exhibiting Vendor-Companies and their participating representatives (just over 300), returned to Bally's Las Vegas' spacious Grand Ballroom for the 18th Annual 2014 NPPA Conference, hosted by National Pharmacy Purchasing Association (NPPA), the premier professional organization for Pharmacy Purchasing Professionals.

After a sumptuous breakfast, the event officially opened with a greeting by Conference Moderator **Michael J.W. Thomas, CPhT**, NPPA's Event & Editorial Assistant. Mr. Thomas gave the attendees present a rundown on the State of the Association, and what to expect in the coming days of the Conference. **Dale J. Kroll**, President/CEO & Editor-In-Chief, was also on hand to welcome the attendees and give a more in-depth history of the organization. At one point, he asked the 1st-year attendees to stand, which clearly showed that over one-third of the attendees were there for the first time. He also thanked the many multi-year veteran attendees for their loyal support.

Mr. Thomas then introduced the members of the NPPA Advisory Board Committee, your representatives to the Association. They are as follows:

Debby Flannery, Pharmacy Purchasing Coordinator at Eisenhower Medical Center in Rancho Mirage, California;

Deb Harden, Pharmacy Buyer at The Christ Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio;

Nina Karl, CPhT, Pharmacy Purchasing Coordinator of St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula, Montana;

Vicki Wernes, Pharmacy Buyer at St. Anthony Medical Center in Crown Point, Indiana;

Leanne Witt, CPhT, Inventory Specialist & 340B Coordinator of Western Region at Mercy Pharmacy Services in Springfield, Missouri.

These 5 individuals are available to discuss issues facing NPPA as an Association, and to offer recommendations to the Executive Board to better serve the membership. If one of them is in your general area, they should be consulted on issues regarding the Association.

Mr. Thomas then went on to introduce the candidates for the **2014 NPPA Outstanding Buyer of the Year Award Program**, an honor given to three extraordinary NPPA members every year. A distinctive plaque was provided to each winner, which was presented to each of the awardees by NPPA President Dale Kroll and a representative of the sponsoring company for this year's Award Program, **Fresenius Kabi USA, LLC**. The duty of selecting 3 honorees from the 13 exceptionally worthy nominees was a difficult task, but after much deliberation from our panel of judges, the decisions for the 3 top placements were as follows.

1st Place, awarded \$1,000 education/travel grant and commemorative plaque:

Michael Urbati, CPhT

Pharmacy Inventory Integrity Manager

Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts

2nd Place, awarded \$500 education/travel grant and commemorative plaque:

Susan Hamilton

Pharmacy Purchasing Officer IV

University of Illinois Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois

3rd Place, awarded \$200 education/travel grant & commemorative plaque:

Kathleen St. Clair, CPhT

Pharmacy Buyer

Columbus Regional Hospital in Columbus, Indiana.

A listing of the other nominees can be found on the Association's website, PharmacyPurchasing.com. It must be pointed out that the NPPA Outstanding Buyer of the Year Award Program is *not* considered a Lifetime Achievement Award; rather it is awarded to an active NPPA member for exemplary service to the recipient's facility, their community, and their profession within the calendar year of their nomination. Further, previous nominees and winners of the second and third place awards can be nominated again after 2 years. The nominations for next year's Award Program will open in December of this year.

After some quick general information statements, Mr. Kroll took over the moderating duties for the next 2 presenters.

"Achieve a Stress-Free Workplace by Living Full Out," by **Nancy Solari**, CEO of Living Full Out in Santa Monica, California, gave a presentation of unwavering determination. Explaining how in the face of a degenerative disease that was slowly robbing her of sight, Solari pressed on to not only achieve her life goals, but could stand before our attendees to share that a handicap is only a handicap-if you allow it to handicap yourself; and then she delineated steps to adapt to challenges and adversity.

Then **Claudio Pontoriero, CPhT**, Pharmacy Supply Chain Manager of Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts stepped up to take the podium as a first-time speaker, after being an NPPA Conference attendee for the past couple of years (a co-worker from the same facility where this year's 1st Place Outstanding Buyer of the Year hails from). Claudio's presentation: "Inventory: Measure to Manage – The Known & Unknown Shrink In Your Drug Supply Chain," gave a new perspective on managing your inventory, and calculating how to reduce wastage, or as Pontoriero referred to it as "shrink." Mr. Pontoriero effectively saved his facility millions of dollars from his diligence and work on this project.

Then Mr. Thomas took over the moderating duties again, to introduce NPPA Advisory Board Member speaker **Nina Karl, CPhT**, Pharmacy Purchasing Coordinator from Providence St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula, Montana. Her presentation: “Working with CFO/Accounting Dept. on Pharmacy Purchasing & Overall Facility Costs,” gave the attendees an insight on the importance of insinuating yourself with administrators outside the Pharmacy Department, and how the top senior executives of your facility (CEO, CFO, CIO, COO, etc., collectively known as the C-Suite) need to be educated on the workings and the specialized needs of the Pharmacy, and the needs of the Pharmacy Buyer in particular. Ms. Karl explained that corporate management does not know what it needs to know about the Pharmacy Buyer, but with the team of the Pharmacy Director and the Pharmacy Buyer, can give the C-Suite the tools they need to help the Pharmacy Department.

Kimberly New, JD, BSN, RN, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) & Diversion Consultant and Healthcare Facility Diversion Liaison for National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators in Knoxville, Tennessee, gave the Association’s first non-governmental presentation on drug diversion. Ms. New gave a face to the issue of drug diversion by pointing out infractions experienced within her authority, and gave real-life applications to prevention and enforcement. In addition, this presentation qualified for the Pharmacy Law CE requirement that is needed for pharmacy technician certification.

“Organizing Your Environment To Become Master Of Your Work Flow Mosquito In The Nudist Camp” by **Kevin Hoehn PharmD, BCPS, CGP**, Pharmacy Clinical Coordinator at Faxton-St. Luke's Healthcare/St. Luke’s Hospital Campus, of Utica, New York, gave a presentation on daily organization and time management, using his own staff as examples for the “don’ts,” and then solutions to organizing your time for maximum efficiency.

After a day of specialized information, attendees (and some vendors who paid a fee), enjoyed this year’s Opening Reception in the Sky-View Rooms on the 26th Floor of Bally’s. There amidst a gourmet buffet and Open Bar, attendees were able to network and mingle in a very relaxed and cordial atmosphere, overlooking a panoramic view of the Las Vegas Strip in the late afternoon hours. The affair was lively and animated, and, as usual, many attendees stayed to the very end.

Thus, Day 1 (Monday August 18), of an intense Conference session was concluded.

Day 2 started with the usual breakfast buffet to start the attendees for another day of Pharmacy Buyer education, as follows.

L. Ross Day, RPh from Novation, LLC in Irving, Texas presented the red-hot topic of “Compounding Misadventures – Drug Shortages & Related Implications.” Though under the subject of drug shortages, Day explained why our current drug shortage epidemic gave rise to the catastrophic compounding pharmacy tragedies that have plagued this country for the past few years, and with no real resolution in sight.

Binita Patel, PharmD, MS, Director of Ambulatory/Retail Services, Froedtert Hospital & Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, gave a comprehensive dissertation on the still-evolving Affordable Health Care Act of 2010. Though the law is still in its infancy, and there are still issues to iron out, Dr. Patel gave a presentation that will answer some questions, as the law has not been fully implemented.

From here, the attendees adjourned to their individual GPO Breakout Sessions (Group Purchasing Organizations), to hear the latest changes in their pharmacy contracts, and to speak with the Administrators of this service. Participating GPO's were Amerinet, MedAssets, Novation, & Premier.

After the lunch break, the attendees were back for another session on the changing face of the 340B Prime Vendor Program. **Todd Karpinski, PharmD, MS, FASHP** from Froedtert Health & Medical College of Wisconsin, at Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin and **John Barnes, CPM, MBA**, Senior Director of Contract Services for Apexus/340B Prime Vendor Program at Irving, Texas, took complementary perspectives on the subject. Dr. Karpinski handled the compliance side of the subject, and Mr. Barnes gave the update on the hot topics. "340B Update Audits & Contract Pharmacy" qualified for the Pharmacy Law CE requirement needed for recertification by pharmacy technicians.

It was then time for the attendees to meet the 87 Exhibiting Vendor-Companies and their participating representatives in the first day of our Vendor Exhibit Hall (Tuesday August 19), where Buyers had the advantage of speaking one-to-one with the vendor companies they do business with. This is one of the most important sessions at the Conference, as some Buyers do not have this advantage, or do not have sufficient time to interface with vendors at their worksites. In some cases, companies were displaying that may not have been familiar to all the Buyers present, so those representatives took the opportunity to introduce their products and services to new potential purchasers of their products. Additionally, national account managers and even company presidents were there to establish personal connections with their customers.

The advantage of this vendor interaction can serve a Pharmacy Buyer well, especially when local sources or contacts are unable to solve day-to-day problems a Buyer may encounter throughout the year. As an incentive for attendees visiting the Exhibit Hall for the full amount of time allowed each day, a "mystery gifter" was charged to seek out 4 Buyer Attendees (each Exhibit Hall day), and reward them with a door prize of \$100 American Express Gift Cards, just for being present. During Tuesday's Exhibit Hall, the lucky and grateful recipients were: **Mary Booker**, CPhT, Pharmacy Buyer at Baylor Medical Center in Irving, Texas; **Cindy Neall**, CPhT, Pharmacy Purchasing Manager at Baltimore Washington Medical Center in Glen Burnie, Maryland; **Nanci Shimman**, CPhT, Inventory Control Specialist at Promedica Bay Park Hospital in Oregon, Ohio; and **Tyrone Gamble**, Purchasing Specialist at Multicare-Tacoma General Hospital in Tacoma, Washington.

After the Exhibit Hall hours ended on Tuesday at 5:30pm, Attendees & Exhibitors were free to go to dinner, take in a Vegas show, or tour the Strip, until the next morning's sessions began again.

This completes Part 1 of the 2014 NPPA Conference Review; see Part 2 on our website along with this first installment (Part 1 was also in the September edition of NPPA's member-publication Pharmacy Purchasing Outlook, with Part 2 in the October edition).