

## NPPA 2015 Conference Review, Part 2

By Mike Thomas, CPhT, NPPA Editorial & Event Assistant

*As Published in October 2015 Pharmacy Purchasing Outlook*

This is Part Two of the National Pharmacy Purchasing Association (NPPA) official review of our recent 19th Annual 2015 NPPA Conference in August, as continued from the previous edition of *Pharmacy Purchasing Outlook (PPO)*, the member-publication of NPPA. To recap: an impressive 320 Pharmacy & GPO Attendees from across the country flocked to Bally's Las Vegas, to hear the latest in cutting-edge information on pharmacy purchasing; and 89 Pharmaceutical companies filled our Vendor-Exhibit Hall, to literally sold-out capacity. The first 2 days of this year's event were already reviewed in our previous *PPO* edition, so we now continue with the final portion of this year's NPPA Conference review.

On Day Three (Wednesday August 19), after attendees were served a full breakfast buffet, Conference Moderator and NPPA Editorial & Event Assistant **Mike Thomas**, CPhT, once again assumed his duties at the Lecture Hall podium.

**Robert Milnes II**, PharmD, BCPS, CGP, Pharmacy Director at Ashtabula County Medical Center in Ashtabula, Ohio, started Wednesday's session with: "***Drug Supply Chain Security Act (DSCSA): Current & Future Implications for the Pharmacy Buyer.***" His discussion described the new Drug Supply Chain Security Act (DSCSA) and how it will deal with counterfeiting and diversion in pharmacy. This presentation qualifies for Pharmacy "Law" CE requirement, necessary for PTCB recertification.

Next, **Sherrie L. Lane**, PD, Inpatient Pharmacy Supervisor, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System at the Eugene Towbin Healthcare Center North Little Rock and John McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas, presented on: "***Ground Zero: Leveraging Pharmacy Automation & Standardized Buying Practices To Increase Patient Safety.***" Dr. Lane described the different types of Pharmacy automation and how these affect buying practices, focusing on patient safety. This presentation qualified for the "Patient Safety" CE requirement, which is now necessary for pharmacy license recertification.

The attendees took a break from the formal lectures and gathered at their respective Drug Wholesaler Breakout Sessions, to learn the latest innovations from their companies and discuss issues with each of the participating company's representatives: AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health, and McKesson.

After a lunch break, the attendees were given a presentation from one of the Conference's veterans, **Chris Saboura**, RPh, MBA, Redmond Regional Medical Center, Rome, Georgia, who discussed: "***The ABC's Of Inventory Control & Management.***" Mr. Saboura discussed the differentiation between the various inventory valuation methods, while describing the inventory control doctrine elements and demand predictability, and finally outlining strategies to assess drug shortages.

It was then time once again for the attendees to meet the 89 Exhibiting Vendor-Companies and their participating representatives in the second and final day of our Exhibit Hall, where Attendees had the advantage of speaking one-to-one with the companies they do business with. This is one of the most important sessions at our event, as some Pharmacy Buyers rarely have this advantage, or at least don't 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 Buyer well, especially when local sources or contacts are unable to solve day-to-day problems a Buyer may encounter throughout the year.

Then once again, as an incentive for attendees visiting the Exhibit Hall for the full amount of time allowed each day, a "mystery gifter" (*not associated with NPPA staff, attendees, or vendors*), was charged to seek out 4 Buyer Attendees in each Exhibit Hall day, and reward them with a door prize of a **\$100 American Express Gift Card**, just for being present. *During Wednesday's Exhibit Hall, the lucky and grateful recipients were as follows:*

- 1) **Jesus Rodriguez**, CPhT, Pharmacy Buyer at Doctor's Center-Bayamon, Vega Baja, Puerto Rico;
- 2) **Kate Tyler**, CPhT, Outpatient Pharmacy Specialist/Buyer at St. Cloud Hospital, St. Cloud, MN;
- 3) **Yvonne Nelson**, CPhT, Pharmacy Buyer at Community Medical Center, Missoula, MT;
- 4) **Nishon Jones**, CPhT, Analyst II/Pharmacy Buyer at University of California Davis Medical Center, Sacramento, CA.

After the final Exhibit Hall hours ended 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. Others returned to their rooms, exhausted from the day's activities, and loaded down with pens, totes, and anything and everything company representatives were legally allowed to provide.

On Thursday August 20 (the final day), the first session was: "***Cross-Training for Pharmacy Buyer Coverage***," by returning presenter **Robert Milnes II**, PharmD, BCPS, CGP, the Pharmacy Director at Ashtabula County Medical Center in Ashtabula, Ohio, accompanied by **Paula Wellings**, CPhT, Pharmacy Buyer at the same facility. Of all the business aspects discussed at this Conference, this lecture could perhaps be deemed the most vital of all, since no matter how experienced and talented a Buyer may be, they simply cannot be on-call 24/7, 365 days/year. It is important to the smooth flow of work responsibilities, as well as the sanity of the primary Buyer, that at least one, if not all the Distributive Staff have some proficiency in performing the duties of the Pharmacy Buyer when that person cannot be available for duty, be it a personal issue, vacation, or an illness.

The final presentation of the Conference was given by **Allen Sutherland**, CPhT, Senior & Regional Pharmacy Buyer at St. Joseph's Hospital & Medical Center/Dignity Health in Phoenix, Arizona, on: “*Career Growth & Leadership - Regional Pharmacy Buyer Meetings.*” Allen impressed upon the attendees that Association growth should not only be centralized, but spread out in the grassroots of the profession; that regional meetings are vital to our national growth and each and every member of NPPA should consider stepping up into a leadership position for their region, to organize their own occasional meetings among the hospitals in their area (as Allen has been so successful at doing for the past few years in the Phoenix, Arizona area).

Finally it was time for attendees to speak up, at an informal “Attendee Feedback Session.” Here, attendees critiqued the Conference and the Association, and offered suggestions for future. With the end of our Feedback Session, the 19th Annual 2015 NPPA Conference came to a close, and everyone returned to their facilities, armed with the knowledge to change their pharmacies for the better.

With an undertaking this large, it would be ludicrous to think this was done only by the people you see. The NPPA Annual Conference is the work of many, many dedicated individuals, whose unique skills and capabilities are vital to the operation of the Conference. First, our onsite staff who assisted with check-in and processing of our Attendees and Exhibitors, as well as providing general guidance. Our onsite staff included our Exhibitor Management team from Event Consultants Global LLC, with special thanks to **Lorraine Gibson** for her hard-work all year leading up to the show as well. Thanks must be given to Allen Sutherland, Contracted Marketing Assistant, who came aboard just recently to talk up the Association with the vendors that call on him as well as at other regional and national Pharmacy meetings. Allen has a wealth of experience and contacts, being a long-time Pharmacy Buyer and member of NPPA and one of our past Advisory Board Members, as well as presenting lectures at a couple of our previous Conferences in addition to this year’s. **Cathy Ravy**, CPhT, a now-retired Buyer from UCSD Medical Center in San Diego, has been vital to our staff as a regular part-time employee, lending a hand from time-to-time throughout the year and more so in our busy Conference season, both in the office as well as onsite in Vegas. Most of our members and customers have communicated in some way with **Jonathan Hewlett**, Office & Advertising Manager and Event Assistant, who handles our advertising, memberships, database management, Attendee Conference Registration, internal sales & general Conference coordination, as well as keeping the office on an even keel. **Dale Kroll**, even though now working remotely from his home in Hemet, CA (1.5 hours from NPPA’s office), is not as involved in day-to-day activities as he once had been, however as President/CEO & Editor-In-Chief, he still oversees the overall workings of our Association. However, the leviathan behind NPPA is **Francine Morgano**, Vice President, Event/Marketing Director & Editor, who personally oversees every aspect of NPPA: managing our member-publication *PPO* 10 times a year, coordinating the speaker roster for our Annual Conference, overseeing the minutia of the hotel facilities and services, and making sure the business side of the company stays running. Each person is a cog in the wheel of a long-standing machine, each with their own responsibilities, each very good at what they do. Often, you never see or hear from these individuals, until you need them! (And myself, **Mike Thomas**, CPhT, ex-Pharmacy Buyer/Technician now NPPA’s Editorial/Event Assistant & Webmaster.)

Thanks must be given again to the **89 Exhibiting companies** at this year's NPPA Conference, who took the time to join us in order to attend to the needs and establish relationships with their clients, our Pharmacy Attendees. As well as this year's Exhibitors who *also sponsored* events or items, as follows.

- 340B University: **Apexus/340B Prime Vendor**
- Badge Lanyards: **X-Gen Pharmaceuticals**
- Cyber Café: **Precision Dose, Inc./TAGI Pharma**
- Notepads & Pens: **Fresenius Kabi USA, LLC**
- Outstanding Buyer of the Year Award Program: **Dr. Reddy's Laboratories**
- Scholarship Program for Under-Funded Attendee-Facilities:  
**Reliance Wholesale, Inc., and US WorldMeds**
- Tote Bags: **Claris Lifesciences**

But most important, we especially thank the *record-breaking 320 Pharmacy Attendees* who took the time from their very busy schedules to enhance their own skills, and to interface with their peers.

Looking to the future, next year's Annual Conference will be a milestone for the Association, as it will be our 20th! Dates are: **August 22 or 23,\* through 25**, 2016, returning to Bally's LV. \*Note a *possible* change to our normal date pattern & total length: to start **Tuesday** (instead of Monday), *through end* of Thursday (instead of by Noon). To be determined as soon as possible. Also, note that Apexus may be returning to again host a 340B University to coincide with our event, on the day before NPPA's official start day (currently still to be determined).

Mark your calendars now, for the week of August 22-25, 2016, to join NPPA and your fellow colleagues, for our historic 20th Annual event! Registration is expected to open in January or February 2016.

