

2014 NPPA Conference Review, Part 2

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This is Part 2 and the conclusion to the 18th Annual 2014 NPPA Conference Review, which was held August 18-21, 2014 at Bally's Las Vegas, Nevada.

On Day 3 of the 2014 NPPA Conference, and after the full buffet breakfast enjoyed by every attendee each morning, the attendees gathered in the Platinum Ballroom of Bally's Las Vegas once more for a full day of educational presentations.

Sherrie L. Lane, PharmD, Assistant Director of Pharmacy/Clinical Coordinator, Anderson Regional Medical Centers North & South, Meridian, Mississippi presented: *“New Drugs & Patent Losses for 2014/2015 – Their Effect On The Pharmacy Buyer.”* Here, Dr. Lane gave a nuts-and-bolts discussion on both the approval process and the procedure for taking products off-patent, making them available for generic manufacturers to make product.

Next on the agenda, **Coleen A. Cherici, RPh, MBA**, Director-Pharmacy Consulting, Premier Inc., N. Chesterfield, Virginia gave a presentation on: *“Drug Shortages – An Update of Trends & Strategies To Protect Patient Safety.”* This often-neglected factor of the Drug Shortage crisis brought up the important issue of Patient Safety in light of this crisis, and discussed steps both hospitals and purchasing organizations can aid in providing a steady, and safe supply for their patient populations. This lecture qualifies for Patient Safety Pharmacy CE requirement, new for recertification for pharmacy technicians.

Moving on to the next section, representatives from the 3 major drug wholesalers were in attendance to bring their clients up to speed on their latest technologies, and to address any issues they may be facing with their services. The wholesalers in attendance were AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health, & McKesson.

During the Lunch Break, invited attendees took advantage of the Hospitality Event sponsored by the Apexus/340B Prime Vendor Program. During this lunch event, representatives from Apexus conducted a “*340B Hot Topics Lunch & Learn*” session, bringing those attendees up-to-speed on the latest developments in 340B. Although not officially part of the Conference CE program, the lecture is still eligible for the Law CE needed for Buyers who must be recertified by PTCB, but do not need ACPE credit as required by certain states.

Returning to the Platinum Room Lecture Hall, attendees went into another session of Best Buyer Practices Panel Sessions, where presenters gave abbreviated lectures on issues facing Buyers today. **Kevin Hoehn PharmD, BCPS, CGP**, Pharmacy Clinical Coordinator, Faxton-St. Luke's Healthcare/St. Luke's Hospital Campus, Utica, New York gave a sobering dissertation on an important career step for Buyers in his lecture on: “*P&T Committee & Pharmacy Buyers – Developing Stronger Relations & Becoming A Member.*” Though many attendees are currently serving on the facilities' P&T Committee, Dr. Hoehn stressed that the Pharmacy Buyer should play as integral a part as an active P&T member, using their knowledge and skills to improve their position in the hospital.

The next presenter was **Cathy Orlando, CPhT, BSHS**, Pharmacy Purchasing Specialist, Memorial Hospital/University of Colorado Health, Colorado Springs, Colorado (and last year's 2nd place honoree of NPPA's Outstanding Buyer of the Year Award Program), who spoke on the topic: “*GPO Conversions & Contracts - Do's, Don'ts & How To Prepare.*” Also neglected to the point of being blindsided when faced with a GPO conversion, Orlando gave a detailed step-by-step process on how she navigated the very difficult waters of the process, where the Pharmacy Buyer is often left out of the process, until the conversion staff discovers that the Buyer's knowledge and experience is very much needed.

After another long day of lectures and presentations, the attendees ended the day by adjourning to the Vendor Exhibit Hall across from the Lecture Hall. There, the attendees could meet the vendors they did not have time to meet the previous day, and to network more with fellow attendees.

As an added perk, NPPA conducted “Door Prize” giveaways in the Exhibit Hall on each day, where a “mystery gifter” was assigned to approach 4 attendees (4 during Tuesday’s Exhibit Hall hours, and 4 on Wednesday), and present them with their prize, a \$100 American Express Gift Card. These lucky individuals benefitted from simply being attendees that were walking the Exhibit Hall floor to meet & speak with our supportive Exhibitor-Sponsors there. Wednesday’s Exhibit Hall Door Prize winners were as follows (*Tuesday’s were listed in the Part 1 Review*): **Yvonne Nelson**, CPhT, Pharmacy Buyer, Community Medical Center, Missoula, MT; **Jeffrey Brown**, CPhT, Pharmacy Buyer, Carolinas Hospital System-Marion, Mullins, SC; **Christine Muzquiz**, CPhT, RPhT, Pharmacy Buyer, Arlington Memorial Hospital, Arlington, TX; and **Nicole Adrian**, CPhT, Pharmacy Purchasing Specialist, Southwest Health Center, Platteville, WI.

The final day of lectures started with the third of the Best Buyer Practices Panel Sessions. This was an all-Buyer session, as **Melanie Welcher, CPhT**, Infusion Pharmacy Informatics & Procurement Coordinator, Sutter Medical Center & Health System (SMCS), Sacramento, California started the day with her presentation: “*Transitioning To EPIC - The Role of the Pharmacy Buyer.*” EPIC is a hospital-wide procedure that coordinates every faction of the patient experience, from Admission to Discharge, and involves nearly every department in the hospital though just one facet of the program, learning, understanding, and utilizing EPIC ultimately makes a Buyer’s life easier.

Next, **Brittany Brougham, CPhT**, Corporate Pharmacy Buyer, Centura Health, Denver, Colorado presented: “*Career Growth for Pharmacy Buyers.*” Ms. Brougham explained the hierarchy of her facility, and how she worked within her facility to position herself for advancement.

Mr. Thomas then took over the podium again for the NPPA Closing/Wrap-Up Session. He announced that the 19th Annual NPPA Conference will return to Bally’s Las Vegas next year for the fourth time at this location, on **August 17-20, 2015**, and suggested to the attendees to start preparing now. Also, to remind all that this year’s “National Pharmacy Buyer Day” will be on October 24, 2014, as usual on the Friday of National Health-System Pharmacist Week each October; and suggested to the attendees to refer to the NPPA website for ideas to celebrate.

In addition, Mr. Thomas reminded all attendees to register their CEs from this year's NPPA Conference with ProCE Inc. (NPPA's ACPE-accredited CE provider), before the late September deadline. Then sometime after that deadline (about a month or so later), attendees can check for your CEs at NABP's CPE Monitor, which is required for all pharmacy technicians residing in states that require ACPE credits for recertification. If your credits have not been transferred to CPE Monitor, it is imperative that this issue be followed up, by contacting ProCE, CPE Monitor, or both. And to complete the process of recertification, for those who are also members of PTCB (the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board), also remember to record this year's CE information in the "myPTCB" section of PTCB's website, where they will be safely stored until it is time for their particular recertification period.

He then reminded the group that after the Conference, when the full list of all the attendees reserved with Bally's hotel, NPPA would randomly pick 3 of them to receive a free hotel night, as a final thanks for staying at our Headquarters Hotel, Bally's Las Vegas. Those winners were: **Leslie Binder**, Pharmacy Buyer, Meyer Orthopedic & Rehabilitation Hospital, Springfield, MO; **Neil Claffey**, Pharmacy Purchasing Manager, St. Francis Hospital & Medical Center, Hartford, CT; and **Jacqueline Moncrief**, RPhT, Pharmacy Purchasing Coordinator, Flagler Hospital, St. Augustine, FL.

Finally, it was the attendees' turn to speak, in the Attendee Networking Forum Session (*optional, not for CE*). Attendees discussed issues important to their specific situations and got immediate feedback from their peers, by asking a question of the group from the audience on our wireless microphone, and then waiting to hear the responses from those in the group who raised their hand to answer (sometimes more than 1 for each question).

Then in the final NPPA Feedback Session (*optional, not for CE*), some of NPPA's staff took questions and suggestions from the attendees. On hand were Vice President & Event Director **Francine Morgano**, who does the lion's share of the legwork setting up the Conference; President & Founder **Dale Kroll** kept the Conference on keel and acted as Ambassador to the organization, meeting and greeting as many members and attendees possible; and myself, **Michael Thomas**, Event & Editorial Assistant. Attendees shared with us their views on the Conference, what they saw what needed possible improvement, and offered suggestions on topics for future Conferences.

Thus concluded another successful NPPA Conference.

No sooner had we packed our bags and headed back West, NPPA was already in the process of organizing the 2015 NPPA Annual Conference. NPPA will return to Bally's Las Vegas for another 4 days of education, networking, and fun. Set your calendars for August 17-20, 2015!

Sometime in January 2015, NPPA will announce a "Call For Speakers" for the 2015 NPPA Conference, along with a list of topics as suggested by member polls and the NPPA Advisory Board. If a subject you wish to present is not on that list, please feel free to suggest it as well. As previously mentioned, the Best Buyer Practices Sessions is, in this writer's opinion, is the most important session at the Conference. Here and only here, are presentations given for Pharmacy Buyers, by Pharmacy Buyers, in a friendly, non-intimidating venue. New speakers can give a 15-20 minute presentation on a subject passionate to them. The up-side: the speaker gets experience and confidence to try a more lengthy discussion in future Conferences while NPPA builds its Speaker Bureau. The Speaker is compensated for their time and effort, the minimum being a comped Registration Fee, the most; well, it can be very attractive. The downside: there is none! It is a "win" for the Buyer, it is a "win" for NPPA, and it is a "win" for the membership, as peer education is networking in its purest sense. Please consider offering your experience and expertise at next year's event.

Lastly, do not make attending next year's NPPA Conference a last-minute decision. Planning to attend now reaps many, many benefits. By registering on the Early Bird rate when they are announced next year, there can be a savings of hundreds of dollars than if you were to register later on. By budgeting for your hotel stay now, it will not hurt as much when it is time to attend. The rate goes up slightly next year, which is still significantly lower than the triple digit rates charged by other conventions. Airfares, also an "X" factor, can be researched, and booked as early as possible. The earlier you book your flight, the more attractive your airfare could be. Moreover, by planning now, you can take advantage of the various incentives offered to offset the expense of attending the Conference. Visit the Member Incentives page on the NPPA website, and see what opportunities are available for a savvy Pharmacy Buyer to finance their Conference. Members who have taken advantage of these incentives have more than paid for their Conference by participating.

Pharmacy Buyers continue to tell us that when they return to their work sites after a conference, they experience a rejuvenating lift from their attendance and interaction with dozens of their peers that extends well into the weeks that follow. If you have not experienced that yet by attending, make sure you do next time.

The NPPA Conferences are presented for every pharmacy purchasing agent's benefit and opportunities: educational, networking, and camaraderie. Where every smart Pharmacy Buyer in the country steps up to seize these opportunities and mark their calendar to be there each year. Will you?

Editorial Note: Join us at next year's NPPA Conference, August 17-20, 2015, returning to Bally's Las Vegas. Registration is expected to open by early February 2015; check back to our website's homepage for the official opening, and look for our email announcement.