

If there was a single word to sum up this year's Conference, it would be, Wow! The 12th Annual Pharmacy Purchasing Networking Conference held at our new location, the Las Vegas Hilton in Las Vegas, Nevada was the perfect simile of how much the Conference has grown from its humble beginnings 11 years ago. This year had an impressive 361 Pharmacy Buyers in attendance, with 88 Pharmaceutical Company Displaying Sponsors, sending 448 of their Sales Representatives. The Sponsors have obviously realized how important it is to be at this Conference, to meet with you, the Buyers, if they think they need to send that many of their Reps to make sure to connect with you!

The meeting actually started with Pre-Registration for Buyers on Sunday, August 10, where nearly a third of the registrants checked in that evening to get their name badges and program materials. After pre-registration, a handful of Buyers met at the Benihana Japanese Restaurant in the Hilton for the first ever Buyers Forum Social; for the opportunity to meet the Buyers who have been conversing throughout the year via our online Buyer's Forum...to finally put a face to a name over the Internet.

On Monday afternoon, August 11, the meeting started with the usual historical presentation of Summerdale Enterprises, Inc., conductors of this Annual Conference, and publishers of *Pharmacy Purchasing Outlook* newsletter, and its growth throughout the years. The awards for the Outstanding Buyers of the Year were also presented during the Opening Session. This year, the honorees were:

- **Sandra Smith, CPhT**, Pharmacy Inventory Coordinator from Miami Valley Hospital, Dayton, OH, who placed first,
- **Angie Westdorp, CPhT**, Pharmacy Buyer from Mercy Hospital, Cadillac, MI, and
- **Eutricia Thornton**, Pharmacy Buyer from Jefferson Regional Medical Center, Pine Bluff, AR

Each received a commemorative plaque and an education/travel grant. Summerdale Enterprises, Inc. President and CEO, **Dale Kroll** was on hand to present the awards to the recipients. The Outstanding Buyers of the Year Award is sponsored by Acute Care Pharmaceuticals, **Tom McGowan**, President and a former Pharmacy Buyer himself.

Then Conference Moderator **Michael Thomas, CPhT**, Assistant Editor and Webmaster for Summerdale Enterprises, Inc., acknowledged the contributions and continuous support of the 19 pharmaceutical companies who have supported the Conference as a Sponsor for 10 years or more, as well as acknowledging the Sponsors of our Grant Program for Under-Funded Facilities. He then moved on to touch upon some of the possible future directions of Summerdale Enterprises, Inc. as it relates to the Pharmacy Buyers, in respect to the:

- Actualization of National Pharmacy Buyer Day;
- Creation of a Pharmacy Buyer Certification Program ("CPhB");
- Formation of a National Pharmacy Buyer Organization; and
- Possible Expansion of the Subscriber Base to include Retail Buyers.

The education sessions started with a deep breath, as the first Speaker of the meeting, **Dr. Errol Korn** of Powermindhealth, Inc. of San Diego, conducted an hour-long session on one of the most requested topics: "Stress." Dr. Korn is a Stress Management Expert who discussed *Stress: How It Affects Your Job Performance, Causes Disease, Reduces Lifespan; and What You Can Do to Tame It*.

Dr. Korn discussed the key factors that cause stress (stressors), and conducted exercises to help the attendees present manage the stress level in their job sites. Though he only mentioned it passing, many of the attendees wanted to get copies of his stress management tapes for their own use after his session was over. For such tapes, see his website, www.powermindhealth.com.

The second educational session of the first day, in a growing trend that would be copied throughout the Conference, had 3 Pharmacy Buyers presenting on: *Improving Pharmacy Efficiency & Safety with Automated Medication Dispensing Devices*. The Speakers were: **Teresa Brown**, Inventory Control Specialist from Eastern CT Health Network in Manchester, Connecticut; **Kelli-Marie Donovan**, Purchasing Coordinator for Adventist Medical Center in Portland, Oregon; and **Donna Riehl, CPhT**, Pharmacy Purchasing Agent from Richardson Regional Medical Center in Richardson, Texas.

Each presented a different automated dispensing device currently in use at their separate facilities (Pyxis, Omnicell, and Carousel). Although coming from different parts of the country, the three Buyers

presented a comprehensive review of the three most popular automated dispensing devices being used in pharmacies today.

After the first day's educational sessions ended with the Automation lecture, the attendees adjourned to meet with their respective GPO's. Seven of the country's largest GPO's came to meet their clients to discuss their latest innovations and to hear any issues that member's might have. To this writer's knowledge, the Pharmacy Purchasing Networking Conference is the only independent meeting where this kind of multi-GPO to Pharmacy Buyer dialogue is being conducted. Each side gets the opportunity to talk face-to-face with their GPO decision-makers. The following Supportive GPO's held sessions with their members: AmeriNet, Broadlane, Consorta/Health Trust, MedAssets, Novation, and Premier. We were pleased to have been able to offer discounts on their Early Registration fees to members of these supportive GPO's. In addition, this year, we set aside a room for the VA/Government facility Buyers in attendance, to meet and discuss their issues together, since they use the Government as their "GPO."

At the end of the day, the Conference's largest social function was conducted. Med-Search, the host of the Conference's Opening Reception, treated the attendees to a lavish and eclectic Dinner Buffet, along with an open bar. The climax of the affair came when host **Sam Karsch**, Med-Search CEO, awarded all-expense cruises to 2 lucky attendees, through a blind drawing.

Day Two started with a presentation from a speaker who has had first-hand experience in his topic. **Christopher Arendt, PharmD**, presented a multi-media discussion regarding the efforts of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota (his facility), to help the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the Deep South. His presentation, *A Tale of 2 Cities – Disaster Relief From 1,100 miles Away, & How to Implement such Efforts in Your Facility*, included a video presentation, taking us right into heart of the disaster areas, showing us what they had to do for their own survival and safety, and the dedication of the men and women who gave up months of their lives to help total strangers. After the video, Dr. Arendt gave an extremely animated presentation on how to apply their efforts to each attendee's facility and to learn the lessons of applied humanity.

The second session was a five-Buyer panel discussing a specialty of their choosing. Dubbed *Best Buyer Practices*, the topics were as varied as the speakers and their expertise, as shown here, following.

- **Beth Meese, CPhT**, Service Excellence Liaison, for Provena United Samaritan Medical Center in Danville, Illinois, gave a colorful presentation on "Communication" that she whimsically called *Pharmacy Trek: Turning on your Communicators*.

- **Leisa Kraus, CPhT**, Pharmacy Purchasing Supervisor for Providence Health System in Portland, Oregon, presented her experience using the DEA's new Controlled Substance Ordering System (*CSOS*).

- **Michael Thomas, CPhT**, presented a sobering inspection of the new *Emily's Act & Why It Should Concern You* (also referenced in June *PPO*).

- **Ed Schryer, CPhT**, Pharmacy Buyer for Intermountain Healthcare in Salt Lake City, Utah, presented his spin on *Drug Shortages*.

- **Richard Ponder, CPhT**, Inventory Coordinator for East Jefferson General Hospital in Metairie, Louisiana, discussed managing your Career with his presentation, *How to Promote Yourself*.

After the lunch break, **Kevin Hoehn, PharmD, BCPS, CGP**, Pharmacy Clinical Coordinator from Faxton-St. Luke's Healthcare in Utica, New York, gave one of the timeliest of all the presentations, as he chronicled the events of the on-going heparin crisis in his presentation, *Pig Guts and Cow Lungs: The Chinese Heparin Connection*. Dr. Hoehn's presentation was suggested for the Conference by his co-worker and former Outstanding Buyer of the Year, **Carl Whittemore**, Pharmacy Purchasing Coordinator of the same facility.

The final educational presentation of the day was conducted by **Eric Kastango, RPh, FASHP**, President of ClinicalIQ, LLC in Florham Park, New Jersey. His presentation, *USP Chapter <797> Updates for 2008*, brought the attendees up to speed with the new regulations for Chapter <797> that took effect the beginning of the year. Mr. Kastango is a member of the U.S. Pharmacopoeia Sterile

Compounding Committee and the one of the nation's leading authorities on USP Chapter <797> policies. This lecture was sponsored by **Acute Care Pharmaceuticals**.

The attendees then adjourned to the Sponsor Display Hall, where a record-breaking 88 Pharmaceutical companies were in attendance to showcase their products and talk to the attendees present. The large Hilton Convention Center was able to easily accommodate both the Educational and Display programs in one convenient location within the hotel, keeping attendees in air conditioned comfort while avoiding the triple-digit Las Vegas heat.

During displays, food and beverages were available for all attendees (including a Sponsored bar by **Williams Medical Company**). Also there, attendees had access to computers with a high speed Internet connection, to check emails and keep in touch with their Pharmacy Department through a Sponsorship from **UDL Laboratories**.

At the end of the second day, the first of two Hospitality Events was conducted. **Bioniche Pharma**, the Sponsor of the event, treated the attendees to an evening of H'or d'ouvres, and an open bar, along with live jazz music.

Day Three of the 12th Annual Pharmacy Purchasing Networking Conference started off with another Pharmacy Buyer team of **Carol Goularte**, Pharmacy Purchaser for CHW/Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital Center in Grass Valley, California and **Allen Sutherland**, Pharmacy Purchaser for CHW/St. Joseph's Hospital & Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona. Their presentation, *How a Pharmacy Buyer Can Survive a Wholesaler Conversion* was of particular interest to the attendees, because it was a subject that is very near and dear to nearly everyone present.

Day Three's morning session concluded as the attendees adjourned to meet with their Wholesalers at their individual breakout sessions. As with the GPO's, the three largest Drug Wholesale Distributors, AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson, came to meet their clients to discuss their latest innovations and to hear any of their issues. To this writer's knowledge, the Pharmacy Purchasing Networking Conference is the only independent meeting where this kind of multi-Drug Wholesaler/Pharmacy Buyer dialogue is being done. Each side gets the opportunity to talk face-to-face with their respective decision-makers.

The afternoon session commenced with the first of the two legal lectures conducted at this year's Conference. *We're a 340B Hospital...Now What?* was presented by **Colleen Bump**, Pharmacy Inventory Technician & Inventory Specialist from Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory, North Carolina and **Munira Zahabi**, Pharmacy Technician & Inventory Specialist from Kern Medical Center in Bakersfield, California. The session was moderated by **Christopher Hatwig, RPh, FASHP**, VP, 340B Prime Vendor Program/Apexus, Inc. in Irving, Texas. Mr. Hatwig supplemented the two Buyers' presentation by bringing the attendees up to date with the latest developments in the 340b Program.

Day Three ended with the second of the sponsored Hospitality Events, this evening's festivities provided by the family of drug companies AmerisourceBergen, American Health Packaging, and ASD Healthcare. Held in the cavernous Ballroom C of the Las Vegas Hilton, the attendees were again treated to an evening of appetizers and an open bar. This is the first time that there were Hospitality events for Pharmacy Buyers at the host hotel every evening of the Conference, a trend this writer hopes will continue.

The last part of the Conference was a unique experience, as CE programs were available at two very important sessions. Up first was the Pharmacy Director/Pharmacy Buyer team of **Erin Claiborne, DPh**, Pharmacy Manager and **Nancy Rayner, CPhT**, Pharmacy Buyer from Jane Philips Medical Center in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Their joint presentation was a primer on Bar Coding as they presented *Preparing the Pharmacy for Bar-Coded Medication Administration*. The final presentation of the day was from **Kathy Pflaum**, Inventory Control Coordinator from St. Francis Health Center in Topeka, Kansas. Ms. Pflaum gave a thorough discussion on new regulations - that have actually been around since 1976, but are new to Health Care with her presentation titled *RCRA/Waste Management*. Her lecture was the second of two legal presentations; both the 340B presentation and the RCRA lecture qualify as the legal CE needed for PTCB recertification.

At the end of the educational sessions, the Qualified Grand Prize Drawing was held. Since the drawing is eligible to current *PPO* subscribers present, a non-Subscriber was selected randomly from the remaining attendees to draw the winning name. The winner of the \$550 educational grant with a matching \$550 grant given the winner's institution was **Sherri Reimer**, Pharmacy Technician for VA Medical Center CIHCS in Des Moines, IA. Upon checking with her management, Sherri later informed us that her facility, due to stringent guidelines about not being able to receive such awards, and had to return their prize money to us. Due to this, we have decided to re-award this Grand Prize. The lucky new winner (who has already been notified), is: **Ann Finley**, CPhT, Pharmacy Buyer, Fremont Area Medical Center, Fremont, Nebraska.

At this time, the whole staff of Summerdale Enterprises, Inc. went up on the stage to conduct the Advisory Forum and receive feedback from the remaining attendees. Comments from those who were able to stay for this final and optional, not for CE, session, were on the whole quite positive. We expect to do a full review of the Feedback session comments and your comments from Conference Surveys in the newsletter by the end of the year. The Conference concluded around noon on Thursday. The dates and hotel for the August 2009 Conference are still pending.

Epilogue:

After a very successful and productive meeting, the spirit of the Conference will continue with several follow-up functions for the attendees of the Conference:

Many of the presenters gave the Conference hosts permission to post their handouts on our website for review or for better inspection, if the more complex handouts were difficult to read;

As always, photos of the Conference will also be posted.

Pharmacy Purchasing Outlook will keep all subscribers advised about the progress on our endeavors to make Pharmacy Buyer Day a nationally acknowledged day of recognition and our efforts to create a Pharmacy Buyer Certification program.

Of course, all Pharmacy Buyers are invited to "keep the dialogue going" by participating throughout the year with your thoughts and opinions via the Pharmacy Buyer Forum on our website.

We hope every *PPO* subscriber will be able to attend our 13th Conference in Las Vegas next August. Details expected to be available in the November *PPO* edition and on our website mid-to-late November.