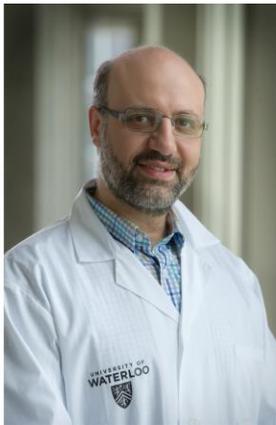


Research Grant Spotlight



Wasem Alsabbagh, BSP, PhD

Assistant Professor, School of Pharmacy, University of Waterloo

“Estimating the proportion of emergency departments visits that may be managed appropriately by pharmacists within expanded scope of practice”

Dr. Wasem Alsabbagh, BSP, PhD., and co-investigator Dr. Sherilyn Houle, BSP, PhD.
Dr. Alsabbagh and Dr. Houle received a Foundation Research Grant of \$13,400.

Publication: See the Foundation’s [Publications](#) webpage for a link to a recent publication on this work.

Q: How did the concept/idea for your research project come about?

A: Overcrowdings in Emergency Departments (EDs) is a common seen to most Canadians. However, it is estimated that almost 1 in 5 patients who seek care in the ED have a non-urgent health condition that can be managed in the community. Pharmacists’ expanded scope of practice may offer additional options to provide care for patients with non-urgent needs. As such, providing more primary care by community pharmacists may help alleviate some pressure from the EDs.

Q: Briefly describe your research project and what it revealed.

A: We used administrative data from 2010 to 2017, pertaining to hospital ED cases from across Ontario. We examined only cases that are considered family practice cases with the least severity (i.e. avoidable visits). From these, we identified the ones that could be managed by pharmacists using the scope of other Canadian provinces. Over the seven years of the study period, we found that pharmacists with an expanded scope could potentially have managed almost one third of avoidable visits, or approximately 1.5 million cases. The most common cases that can be managed by pharmacists were: acute pharyngitis, conjunctivitis, rash and other non-specific skin eruption, otitis externa, cough, acute sinusitis, and dermatitis.

Q: How will the results of your research project be used?

A: Empowering pharmacists to practice to their full scope may have a positive impact on overcrowding in EDs in Ontario. As such, legislating expanded scope – such as prescribing for minor ailments – can have a profound benefit on the health care system.

Q: What impact will your research have on hospital pharmacy and patient care?

A: Expanded scope may be introduced as ED-based pharmacists practicing to their full scope which would be an important advancement of hospital pharmacy practice to meet health care needs of patients. Overcrowding in EDs can lead to increased mortality and a higher rate of patients who leave without receiving treatment. Thus, caring for patients by pharmacists with expanded scope either in the community or in the ED can reduce this overcrowding and improve patient outcomes.

Q: What role, if any, did the research grant play in supporting your professional career?

A: With the funding from the CSHP Foundation, we were able to obtain access to necessary data and tools that enabled us to perform this research project. Research funding landscape in Canada is extremely difficult, especially for applied research – such as pharmacy practice.

Q: Why should healthcare professionals, key decision makers and the general public pay attention to the research done by pharmacists?

A: Relieving strain on the health care system is a pressing issue to policy-makers. As such, examining innovative practice models of health care professionals is essential to find better ways to relieve this strain. Pharmacists are the experts of pharmacotherapy among all health care professionals. However, they are underutilized, and further support to pharmacist to practice to full scope would be ideal to improve health care.

The role of the hospital pharmacist is changing; research and education will support the change.

CSHP Foundation grant and scholarship recipients are changing the face of pharmacy practice. Learn more at cshp.ca/cshp-foundation