

# BRANCH OUT

Volume 8, No. 1

Winter 2005

## Message From Branch President

As I write this report, it is less than a few weeks away from Christmas and I am already in the midst of the holiday blitz. Much like most of you, I've been busier than a Wal-mart greeter on a Saturday afternoon in the month of December. It seems like the holiday madness starts earlier every year.

This is my first communication as president and I am looking forward to working with each of you as our Branch grows. I know that I have large shoes to fill (Thanks for the great job, Linda!), but I am confident that, with the help of our Past-President and the rest of the executive, including our new Senior Advisor, Lisa Bishop, I will be able to keep us moving in the right direction.

I had the pleasure of representing you all at the CSHP national AGM in Ottawa in August and as usual, I was amazed at the work that is being done by the society throughout the nation. I also had the pleasure of meeting the national executive and many current leaders within our profession and can assure you that the society is in good hands.

At the Branch AGM in Gander in October, we had a very successful meeting with PANL. We were able to forge new ground in our relationship and are looking forward to future collaborative efforts.

As you know, the success of our society and Branch is directly dependent on its members and I thank all of you who have gotten involved and made a difference. I am open to any suggestions and ideas you may have to improve or expand our Branch activities.



Thank you and enjoy the holiday season.

Cheers,

Mike LeBlanc

President CSHP NL Branch

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**Vision 2006:**

*"A Revitalized Society...The influential voice for hospital pharmacy...  
Inspiring and Supporting our Members"*

# CSHP NATIONAL AGM 2005

By: Dion Ross, Pharmacist, Burin Peninsula Health Care Center

Greetings from Ottawa and AGM 2005!

First of all I would like to thank Eli Lilly Canada for their generous support in providing a travel grant to allow a CSHP member from Newfoundland and Labrador to have the opportunity to attend the AGM in Ottawa. As luck would have it this year I was that member and I jumped at the chance to be able to travel to our nation's capital for the AGM. For those of you who have had the opportunity to travel to Ottawa, I'm sure you can appreciate what a beautiful city it is; and for those who have not had the opportunity to visit there, I would highly recommend it!

AGM 2005: "A Capital Destination" provided an excellent opportunity for Hospital Pharmacists from across the country to network with other colleagues and to avail of the many excellent Educational Sessions which were presented. I must commend the Educational Services Committee and its Chairperson, Judy Chong, for compiling an excellent slate of speakers on a wide range of topics that appealed to Pharmacists practicing in many different areas. Some of the topics discussed included Infectious Diseases, Palliative Care, Medication Reconciliation and Diabetes. One talk that I found very informative and topical was presented by Dr. Steven Shalansky, PharmD. It outlined the recent developments surrounding the Cardiovascular Safety of COX-2 Inhibitors. Since this is a topic that I felt everyone would be interested in, I decided to summarize Dr. Shalansky's talk for the benefit of the members.

## Cardiovascular Safety of COX-2 Inhibitors

Dr. Shalansky began his talk with some background information concerning the pharmacokinetics of COX-2 inhibitors and the effects which may or may not contribute to the cardiovascular complications of some of these medications. Since the information surrounding the potential cardiovascular risks of this class of drugs has been well documented I will not dwell on the portion of Dr. Shalansky's talk pertaining to this subject. I will however pick up the story beginning in 2004 when there was a firestorm of activity surrounding the COX-2 inhibitors.

In September 2004 Merck withdrew Vioxx from the market. The reason for this decision was based on the 3 year Adenomatous Polyp Prevention (APPROVe) Study. It found that at a dose of 25 mg daily versus placebo Rofecoxib had an increased risk of confirmed cardiovascular events beginning after 18 months. In November of that year Health Canada requested that the manufacturers of COX-2 inhibitors to supply world wide safety data on their products. In December, Pfizer, the manufacturer of Bextra (Valdexoxib), revised the product monograph to include: a contraindication for patients who are post-CABG; to use caution in patients with IHD or risk factors such as CHF, unstable angina, hypertension, MI, TIA or stroke; and information concerning serious skin reactions. Also in December 2004, there was a Health Canada Advisory concerning an increased risk of serious CV events with Celecoxib seen in a cancer prevention trial. There was a 2.5 times higher risk with the 400 mg/day dosage and a 3.4 times higher risk with the 800 mg/day dosage. Health Canada advised those people who may have been taking Celecoxib 400 mg per day long-term to "discuss alternative therapies with their physicians".

All of this prompted the FDA to conduct a safety review of the COX-2 inhibitors in February 2005. The recommendations which came out of this review included: that Naproxen + PPI be used for first line therapy, the cardiovascular effects of all 3 COX-2 inhibitors was unanimously recognized, concomitant low-dose ASA with COX-2 inhibitors was not recommended because it would offset the positive GI effects of these drugs, that black box warnings be included for nonselective NSAIDs. Specifically for the 3 COX-2 inhibitors, all were recommended to be marketed with more stringent warnings and, in the case of Celecoxib and Rofecoxib, using reduced dosage. In the case of Vioxx, there was a vote of 17 to 15 in favor of renewed marketing of the drug. Dr. Shalansky however highlighted an editorial in the NEJM of medicine in March 2005 which pointed out that 10 members of the FDA Advisory Committee who had voted to continue marketing these drugs "had financial ties to the manufacturers of the drugs in question".

In June of this year, Health Canada conducted an Expert Advisory Panel and Public Forum on the safety of these drugs. It recognized the increased risk of cardiovascular disease caused by COX-2 inhibitors. It recommended that warnings be added to the product monographs, that consumers receive evidence-based summaries, that the risk of hypertension, edema, kidney and cardiovascular disease be advertised prominently, and that guidelines be put in place for physicians and pharmacists. With respect to the individual agents the panel voted 13-0 to continue marketing Celebrex and 12 to 1 allow Vioxx back on the market. The rationale given for this was that both agents have a risk of cardiovascular disease similar to that of other NSAIDs but a decreased risk of gastrointestinal harm. Bextra however did not fare so well as the panel voted 8 to 5 to not allow this agent back on the market. Health Canada had asked Pfizer to suspend sales of this agent on April 7 of this year until safety issues could be resolved.

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**We're on the Web!**  
**www.cshp-nl.com**

**Merry Christmas  
and Happy New  
Year to all our  
CSHP members  
and their families!**

**Wishing you all a  
safe and enjoyable  
holiday season!**

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Hi!

*My name is Renelle Bishop and I am the new editor for Branch Out. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Angie for all the sweat and tears she has put into Branch Out over the past several years! I hope I can continue the quality of the newsletter that she maintained while she was editor. We wish her all the best with her new project that will be arriving soon!!!!*

*As I am a new hospital pharmacist and an even newer editor of Branch Out, any and all suggestions are welcome. If you have any ideas for possible article subjects, new sections for the newsletter or anything that you would like to see, please let me know. I hope you enjoy the newsletter and with contributions from all members, we can continue to make it better!*

*Wishing you all the best this holiday season*

**Renelle**

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**People....**

*Congratulations to Mike and Cathy LeBlanc on the arrival of their new baby boy, Jonathon.*



**What's going on in your neck of the woods? Let me know about any births, announcements, marriages, achievements, etc that we can place here in the People section. It will help all our members keep in touch with each other!!**

