

The Pulse

Paramedics: Trusted – Professional

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STARS comes to Saskatchewan!

STARS, an Alberta-based highly specialized airborne emergency medical system for critically ill and injured patients, will begin offering services during the day in April 2012, based in Regina. By the summer of 2012, it will be offering 24-hour service for Regina and area. In late 2012, it will begin offering day services based in Saskatoon, followed a few months later by 24-hour services for Saskatoon and area.

“Saskatchewan has a great air and ground ambulance system, with practitioners that do a fantastic job. What we can offer is the ability to land directly at a scene with the helicopter, and aid the ground EMS in stabilizing the patient and taking the patient to tertiary care faster. In situations where there are multiple patients, we can assist and take the strain off ground EMS. STARS can also provide critical care in inter-facility transfers,” said Daniel Kobylak, Clinical Operations Lead, STARS Saskatchewan. *continued on page 2*

Members select new College leadership

It is now time for members to vote in a process that will choose the next vice-president of the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics. The term of the person elected vice-president will be for two years, at which point the individual will then automatically move into the role of president for another two-year term. The current president and vice-president have each served three-year terms, but, as a result of recent bylaw changes, the incoming president and the elected vice-president will only be required to serve two-year terms.

Two candidates have put their name forward for the vice-president position. A short biography on each is available on page 4. Voting will take place in March and early April. SCoP will tally the ballots on April 13 and declare the winning candidate at the AGM on April 20. Watch your e-mail for more information on the electoral process. *continued on page 4*

Annual coordinator re-training – changes

CME coordinators for SCoP will no longer be required to attend an annual re-training session.

“We have found that the annual re-training session may not be providing as much value as it did when the College was first started,” said Dale Backlin, Investigations and Research Coordinator, SCoP.

Backlin said the College is currently moving to a system where, once trained, coordinators would only be required to do updates when issues affecting coordinators arise.

This would mean that all expiry dates on coordinators’ certificates have been extended. Backlin said as the College evolves, coordinators are moving to more of an administrative role, in which they will be largely focusing on ensuring CME approval requests have been properly submitted and will be assisting members in making sure their renewals are complete before submission.



Next new coordinator training session set

The next new coordinator training session will take place on Thursday, May 10, in Saskatoon. The session will run from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and will take place at the Travelodge Hotel Saskatoon. To register for the session or for more information, call SCoP.



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STARS comes to Saskatchewan!

Kobylak said what STARS offers in addition to helicopter air services is an ability to help guide transport decisions and enhance coordination between attending physicians and facilities receiving the patient.

“STARS isn’t just a red helicopter. We provide a system to effectively move patients from rural centres to higher tertiary care centres in the cities. This includes providing early patient stabilization and transportation advice to the attending physician,” said Kobylak.

This system reduces the need for physicians to spend time arranging patient transport and finding a physician who will receive the patient. In effect, the STARS system will help to streamline the processes currently used in patient transfers.

“We work on expediting transport for those patients. If it is a critical patient, STARS will be brought into the call to lead the discussion, but it won’t necessarily always be STARS that will be transporting the patient. The type of transportation selected will be the one that best suits the needs of the patient. Our role is to help those rural practitioners out as much as possible in making those decisions,” he said.



The program is currently hiring for the expanded Regina office.

The first round of employees for the Saskatoon office will be hired in late summer. Kobylak said STARS looks for Advanced Care Paramedics who have had experience with a high call volume and nurses who have experience working in ER or ICU.

STARS was initiated in Calgary, in 1986, by Dr. Gregory Powell, an emergency room physician at the Foothills Hospital. Dr. Powell saw a need for a critical care transport service that would assist rural Alberta, and began the development of STARS.

In April 2011, STARS signed a 10-year agreement with the Saskatchewan government and has recently signed a 10-year agreement with Manitoba to establish a base in Winnipeg.

“We are looking forward to working with all health providers and our partners in emergency services across Saskatchewan. We really appreciate all the support we’ve had to date from providers. It has been overwhelming, but I didn’t expect anything less from Saskatchewan!” said Kobylak.



The STARS team is composed of Advanced Care Paramedics trained in critical care, and registered nurses who are trained in critical care and have experience in the ICU and/or emergency department.

Initially, the program will offer a BK 117 helicopter out of Regina and then another out of Saskatoon. This vehicle will transport a single patient. In 2013, an AW 139 helicopter will be introduced in Saskatoon, which will offer a longer range and will be able to transport two patients. With the three helicopters, Kobylak says STARS will be able to cover between 90% and 95% of the Saskatchewan population out of the two bases.

Kobylak says when STARS offices are running at full capacity they will employ between 40 and 44 medical staff.



Saskatchewan to participate in first writing of national PCP and ACP exams

In partnership with the Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators (COPR), the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics (SCoP) and its provincial counterparts across the country have been involved in developing national ACP and PCP exams.



The introduction of these exams will help to ensure all PCPs and ACPs across the country have similar skill levels, providing the same standard of patient care in all jurisdictions across Canada. The exam has been developed using two committees. A Policy Committee that is making the critical decision regarding the exam policy using a process called blueprinting, including how the blueprint links back to the NOCP, weighting the sections of the NOCPs back to the exam, rules around exam development and use, etc.

A second committee is the exam development group that has been involved in the actual exam development. Saskatchewan has had four representatives on the Exam Development Committee, including two ACPs, a PCP and an ICP. Every province has had representatives on this committee, helping to ensure that

the test will truly be a national exam. All exam questions are being written under the guidance of the exam consultants.

“So I think the result of this will be a really good, representative, defensible exam,” said Sheri Hupp, Executive Director, Saskatchewan College of Paramedics.

Hupp said the last provincial PCP and ACP exams will take place in April 2012, and the first national exam will take place toward the end of June or beginning of July 2012.

“The good news is that Saskatchewan will be participating in the first writing of the national exam. This is a really important step because it means we’re making further progress in terms of public protection,” she said.

Hupp said there has been a lot of interest around the new exams. Information has been posted on the SCoP website, sent to SIAST to pass onto students, and sent to Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association (SEMSA) to pass to their members.

She said the exams have been developed based on the National Occupational Competency Profile (NOCPs). The profile helps all provinces to align the skills of their paramedic sector. A closer alignment assists with enabling labour mobility across the country, which means that being licensed in one province won’t prohibit ACPs and PCPs from working in another.

“The NOCPs and the national exams help to ensure the same quality of PCP and ACP candidates, no matter where they come from,” said Hupp.

Unlike the provincial exam, the national exam will have funds available to ensure questions are regularly rotated, new questions are tested, the exam is regularly reviewed in relation to NOCPs, and candidates will never write the same exam twice.

A blueprint was created for the PCP and ACP exams and will be made available to the public in the near future. It will show how many questions will be in each category of the NOCPs, giving exam candidates a good idea of what they should be focused on. Exams will be multiple choice, taken on a computer and will initially be based on the 2001 NOCPs. They will eventually be based on the 2011 NOCPs, once these updated profiles have been introduced into educational programming.

“The NOCPs and the national exams help to ensure the same quality of PCP and ACP candidate, no matter where they come from”

Exam candidates will be able to make up to three attempts at the exam within the eligibility period determined by the provincial regulator. If they are not successful by their third attempt, they will be required to submit evidence to the provincial regulator showing that they have completed further, approved training before being permitted another attempt. All candidate appeals will need to be based only on irregularities. COPR will only entertain appeals on the basis of irregularities in exam administration, but not on exam content.

Fees for the new exams will be \$500 and will be managed by COPR. All fees will be paid directly to COPR rather than SCoP. Exams will be held in Regina and Saskatoon. To write the exam, you must have successfully completed a provincially approved education program at the relevant level, or a provincially deemed equivalent, and you must have the approval of your candidacy by the regulator.

Members select new College leadership

Mike Vanstone is an Advanced Care Paramedic who works for the Prairie North Health Region. He started his career as an EMT in Rosthern in 1992. He worked for WPD Ambulance in North Battleford from 1996 to 2001, at which point he took a management position with an EMS service in Edmonton.

Mike returned to Saskatchewan in 2007 after learning that the Prairie North Health Region was hiring full-time paramedics for the emergency department. The move was a good one for his young family, bringing them closer to parents and grandparents. He has worked with the health region ever since.

Mike became involved with the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics in 2011 as a member of the College's Discipline Committee. He found the experience so worthwhile that he decided to run for the position of vice-president of the College.

"I like to be involved in change, and the best way to do that is to become part of the program. A person can sit back and make all the suggestions they want, but if they are not actively participating with the College then it really won't make a difference," said Vanstone.

Mike said he has been impressed with the work that has been done to both move the College forward and build a better understanding of EMS within the community. However, he'd like to see more done to enhance the image of EMS workers among the more "general" public.

"In the past, we have not had a lot of recognition. It's always fire and police, but these guys are front-line workers. They're there right off the bat treating people, and usually the recognition they deserve is not given," he said.

Mike believes the College is taking the right approach in the areas of licensing and exams. He suggests that this approach will help to ensure high quality professionals within the College membership, which will help to build the reputation of all members. He said that if the organization can show it is attracting and keeping high quality professionals, the broader public will begin to appreciate the important role played by paramedics in helping critically ill or injured people.

Mike feels he would be a good fit for the vice-president role, but says, win or lose, he will continue to be involved with SCoP.

"I am just getting my foot in the door right now and trying to make a positive difference," he said.

Dan Lewis is an Advanced Care Paramedic who started his career as a volunteer First Responder in Manitoba (EMR level in Saskatchewan) in 1990, while working as a church pastor.

In 1995, he took the EMT exam and then moved to Regina in 1996. In 1998, he began working for the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. In 2004, he went back to school to get his Advanced Care Paramedic accreditation.

Dan has been involved with the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics since its inception. He was on the board of the Paramedic Association before it evolved into the College. As a member of the Association Board, he played a role in the evolution of the Association into the College.

He stepped away from having an active role in the College in 2007 for family reasons, but he stayed on as

chair of the College's Nominations Committee from the inception of the College until 2011 and has recently moved onto the Professional Conduct Committee.

He has decided to run for the vice-president position because there are a number of areas in which he would like to play a role in relation to the College. Although he believes collaboration with Saskatchewan Health and the College of Physicians and Surgeons is

important, he would like to see the College become a bit less dependent on the two organizations. He believes SCoP has matured to the point now that it has the ability to regulate its members appropriately and in the best interest of the public.

"I'd like to see SCoP receiving a bit more freedom to regulate the profession without the continual required permissions or approvals of Saskatchewan Health and the College of Physicians and Surgeons," said Lewis.

He also believes the College still needs to focus effort on ensuring members really understand the role of the College and the benefits it provides to members.

"Having an organization that keeps track of our training ensures we have the skills we need to do the job. It protects us all and helps to protect the public. It helps to ensure that people will have greater respect for us. It means the public can trust the service they are getting," he said.

Lewis said, if elected, he would work with Council to continue the positive direction in which they are moving.



Mike Vanstone



Dan Lewis

Member feature – Tyler Selvig



Tyler Selvig

Tyler is an Advanced Care Paramedic currently working with MD Ambulance in Saskatoon. His team responds to calls in a radius outside of Saskatoon that includes Martensville, Warman, Hepburn, Delisle and Radisson.

Selvig began his career as a paramedic in 2004 when he took the Primary Care Paramedic training through SIAST. He had initially set his sights on being a firefighter and took a firefighting course in Vermilion in the spring of 2004. He went through the hiring process to be a firefighter in Edmonton, but, near the end of the process, found he needed an Alberta College of Paramedics license, which he did not have.

He went back to work at Crestline Coach where he was building ambulances until, in 2006, a friend told him that MD Ambulance was hiring. As luck would have it, he was hired on as a part-time Primary Care Paramedic, and overnight he fell totally in love with the job.

“We were busy that whole summer, so I was working all the time – getting called in at all hours. It was exciting. I learned a lot – getting to work with a lot of experienced paramedics helps you to get a good skill set early on,” said Selvig.

In 2008, he went back to school to get his Intermediate Care Paramedic license. He said he kept the option of moving to firefighting open, but found he really liked the job of paramedic.

“I found I liked this too much to make a move,” he said.

He became so enamoured with the field that in 2008 he signed up for university courses in anatomy and physiology. He so much enjoyed the classes and the work that in 2009 he applied for, and was accepted to, the Advanced Care Paramedic program.

“I like the way everyone kind of works as a team. You learn from each other and find ways to improve on the work you do. The team approach is a huge part of why I enjoy the job. I don’t think this job would be possible if we didn’t work as a team,” said Selvig.

Selvig says in the future he’d like to move into the area of training others.

“I’ve had the benefit of working with some great mentors, like Tim Hillier. I have so much respect for all the people that have taught me and helped me get to the level I am at today. I wouldn’t be at the level right now if I didn’t have the company that I work for and the people that are there. I’d like someday to be able to pass my knowledge onto others,” he said.

Asked if he is still considering a future career in firefighting, Selvig said, “I guess the idea is not totally gone – but, at the same time, I really, really like where I am right now. I don’t see myself pursuing it anytime soon.”

Handle with care: patient records

Health providers have an obligation to maintain privacy around patient records. Failure to comply with privacy regulations is so serious that it can result in fines of up to \$500,000 and/or a year in prison.

The Saskatchewan Health Ministry is reminding all health care professionals that they are governed by the Health Information Protection Act (HIPA) and its regulations. Under HIPA, health care providers have a duty to:

- ensure records are stored safely and securely;
- prevent unauthorized access to the information;
- ensure patients have access; and
- during disposal, protect patient privacy until records are fully destroyed.

A recent case in which thousands of medical files were discovered in a Regina recycling bin shows how important it is to ensure all members are aware of privacy legislation.

The Ministry of Health is advising all health care professionals, health care organizations, and their office managers to ensure the processes they use on a daily basis comply with the privacy legislation. They are also urging health organizations to review the requirements under the legislation with their health care professionals.

Help set the course for SCoP in 2012!

SCoP's Annual General Meeting will take place April 20 in Prince Albert. All members are encouraged to come out and take part in this event.

"It is an important aspect of any practitioner's career development, in that being involved with the AGM allows them to have a voice, gives them an understanding of why the College has taken the approach it has, and provides them with an opportunity to become involved in the College," said Lyle Karasiuk, Director of Public Affairs for Parkland

Ambulance in Prince Albert.

Karasiuk said the College depends on a lot of people to make it work and to help advance the profession. He said by getting involved practitioners can help to shape the development of the organization.

He is pleased the College has selected Prince Albert for the location of the 2012 AGM.

"It's great for people to be meeting here in PA. We have practitioners from all across the north who might not

travel to an AGM that was held in the south – so a more central location gives everyone an opportunity from across the province to attend the AGM and become a part of the growth and development of their profession."

The AGM will take place at the Prince Albert Exhibition Centre. Registration forms and ballots for Council election will be coming out to you shortly. If you are planning on attending, please go to the SCoP website or watch for an e-mail from SCoP with a registration form.

Ensure your mandatory certificates are correct to maintain your license



To be licensed through SCoP, all levels of practicing members must have taken the Health Care Provider Basic Life Support (HCP BLS) CPR training either through St. John Ambulance, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan or through the Canadian Red Cross.

As well, all members must have a certificate showing that they have taken the HCP BLS.

This requirement applies to all members, including those coming in from out-of-province under labour mobility, new members, and members that are renewing their membership during the renewal period.

The HCP BLS level of training includes techniques not covered in the CPR training offered to the broader

public. The Health Care Provider training level introduces the use of pulse checks, bag valve mask resuscitators, addresses techniques used in teams, provides for different EMS activation sequences and introduces ventilation rather than just hands-only CPR components.

While the requirement was not something SCoP enforced as closely in the past, it is now being much more strict about members having proof of this certification before they can be licensed, or before licenses can be renewed with SCoP.

The College is urging members to ensure they have this certification, and that the certification clearly states that the training taken was at the HCP BLS level.

"In the last renewal period, we spent a significant amount of time contacting members, who had not provided evidence of completing a Health Care Provider BLS course, through phone calls, letters, and e-mails. In the future, members will need to ensure they have provided this information as part of their renewal," said Dale Backlin, Investigations and Research Coordinator, SCoP.

Applications submitted without this information are considered incomplete and will be subject to late fees and license restrictions.

As well, members need to ensure that the certificates are up to date. The certificate is good for two years from the date of training, so for the 2013 licensing year, you need to have taken training in either 2011 or 2012. SCoP looks at the date of issue of the certificate and not the expiry date, unless you are an instructor, in which case the expiry date will apply.

SCoP is encouraging all members to check their own certificates to ensure they meet with the College's licensing requirements. Make sure you know what is required in a complete application.

Beginning this renewal period, the College will not be sending a series of reminders to members about incomplete applications as they have in the past. If a renewal comes in without the complete required information, the member will get one e-mail only indicating that the submission was incomplete, and there will be no further follow-up. If the member does not then provide the required information, they will be subject to late fees or potentially lose their license.

"Maintaining training records can be a bit of work, but it is all part of our role as professionals to ensure we have the training required for licensing and have proof that the required training was taken," said Backlin.



Military paramedic to speak at ITLS AGM

ITLS Saskatchewan AGM will take place in Prince Albert on April 21, the day after the SCoP AGM. The two AGMs were paired to allow interested members to attend both sessions. All ITLS instructors are encouraged to attend both the AGM and the exciting educational session to follow.

Anyone interested, whether or not you are an ITLS instructor, can attend the educational session following the AGM.

The educational session, which begins at 1:00 pm, will feature Sergeant Karen Dickie, 1 Field Ambulance Company, CFB Edmonton. Sgt. Dickie is a field paramedic with the Canadian Military. She will examine how the role of a field paramedic working in areas such as the battlefields of Afghanistan is different from the role of a paramedic in Saskatchewan.

She will also talk about the role of SARTEC paramedics, an elite

group of Canadian Military paramedics who work in search and rescue. She will also provide a session on battlefield injury.

“We’re really excited to hear what it’s like to be a military paramedic and hear about what they do differently. It will be interesting to see if there are things we can learn from their experiences. It will be a really exciting and different educational session,” said Karasiuk, member of ITLS Saskatchewan executive council.

SCoP educational credits will be provided for those who take in this session. The value of the credits is still to be identified.

The ITLS AGM and educational session will take place at the Prince Albert Exhibition Centre. To register for either, or both of the AGM and educational session, visit www.itlssask.ca or call Lyle at (306) 953-8358.



On-line renewal showing success

SCoP's first ever on-line renewal process came into effect in October 2011. While there were some minor challenges, overall the process was found to be very successful. The registration process for members who registered and paid their membership fees on-line was much faster than in the past. The on-line renewals also reduced the work load for SCoP's small office staff.

Challenges that were identified in the process included:

- some members were unaware of the on-line renewal process despite significant communication with members on the new initiative;
- some members still chose to submit one or more pieces of paper documentation by mail, fax or e-mail, which necessitated a manual compilation process – this resulted in the need to hire a part-time worker throughout December and January to deal with the paper;
- some applications submitted were incomplete or late arriving; and
- some rude responses by individual members to calls



from SCoP staff to sort out issues with registration information.

To address the challenges, SCoP is:

- encouraging members to read correspondence that comes out from the College;
- encouraging members to submit all registration documentation electronically;
- making plans to take a firmer stand on not accepting incomplete or late applications; and
- encouraging members to remember that SCoP staff are calling to help ensure your registration material is correct – and asking that members try to respond to requests as civilly as possible.

In addition, SCoP had a couple of system “glitches.” One resulted when some members logged out or shut

down their system before the renewal had completed the submission process to SCoP – their application was caught in “cyberspace.”

To avoid this, members are asked to please make sure their application process is complete, and a confirmation e-mail of the submission has been received, before

members log out or shut down their computers. This year, SCoP contacted all members that experienced this problem, and SCoP waived all late fees that came about as a result of this issue because the College considered this a learning process for 2012.

SCoP also experienced a systems problem when some uploaded documents did not work for the system. As a result, College employees contacted all members impacted by this “glitch” to gather the documents through another route. SCoP will work on getting better upload requirements out to members before the 2013 renewal.

Also – just a reminder – please make sure you keep a record of your user names and passwords. You will need them for the 2013 renewal period and to update personal information with the College (i.e., address and phone number).

Members to take on more responsibility for maintaining training and CME records

As SCoP matures as an organization, it is taking additional steps to increase the professionalism of its members. A key area of focus is enhancing member accountability.

As part of this new focus, SCoP has just announced that it will no longer require members to submit documentation of IP2 protocol training. Members will still be required to complete both the initial and ongoing training to ensure competency and to meet the employer established requirements before accepting responsibility of a device listed under IP2. However, instead of submitting documentation to the College, members will be required to keep records of the training taken, for up to five years. The documentation needs to include both information about the initial training and all re-training taken in accordance with employer policies. It would need to be

produced in the event of an audit.

All members are encouraged to create an electronic file (e-portfolio) and to keep records of all training they've taken.

“As professionals, it is our responsibility to ensure we have a record that shows we have the training required to do the job safely. The College is really moving towards a model where the member is treated as a professional in all areas, including taking responsibility for maintaining files on training taken,” said Dale Backlin, Investigations and Research Coordinator, SCoP.

IP2 protocols cover training on devices such as: chest tube monitoring, Jackson Pratt drains, Heimlich valves, and peritoneal dialysis tubes.

Renowned paramedic remembered



Norbert Georget, 1964-2012

Well-known Saskatchewan paramedic Norbert Georget passed away on January 24 from a stroke – he was just 48 years old.

Norbert was known for founding the Smart Youth Power Assembly™, a program which offered counseling and motivational assemblies to students, parents, teachers and professionals. Since its inception, Smart Youth Power Assembly™ has been delivered to over 1.5 million students in 2,000 public schools throughout Canada and the United States.

Norbert was an internationally renowned speaker, student motivator and paramedic with over 28 years experience, and was frequently on radio and television talk shows and featured in numerous newspaper articles across the country. He also authored *No Nonsense Parenting for Today's Teenager*.

Norbert Georget started his career with Parkland Ambulance in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and then moved to Saskatoon to work at MD Ambulance as an advanced EMT-Paramedic. He was in the very first Advanced Paramedic class in 1984 and was one of the first six paramedics in Saskatoon.

“Norbert was a great person as well as a true leader in EMS. He will be missed by MD Ambulance and the entire EMS profession,” stated Dave Dutchak, President and CEO of MD Ambulance.

Norbert started the Smart Youth Power Assembly™ in 1990, as a hobby on his days off. However, the program turned into a full-time commitment, providing counseling to thousands of youths across North America. Georget traveled over 100,000 kilometres every year to speak with students.

He received the Saskatchewan R.G. Olson Emergency Medical Services Award in 1991, the Saskatchewan Safety Council Award in 1989, a Certificate of Appreciation from British Columbia's Counter Attack Program, and he was the recipient of the 1988 Provincial Safe Grad Recognition Award in Saskatchewan.

Members received new registration numbers

All members' registration numbers have changed slightly as a result of the College's new registration process.

Instead of having a two-digit training number and a four-digit number, members have kept the same two-digit training number, but the four-digit number has moved to a five-digit number.

For most current members, the numbers have changed only with the addition of a “1” in front of their current four-digit number.



New EMR exam takes effect April 1, 2012

Saskatchewan has recently introduced an EMR exam to ensure EMRs have the training required to perform on the job. Manitoba and Alberta have had similar exams for a number of years. The move brings Saskatchewan in line with the two other prairie provinces.

All EMRs currently licensed with SCoP will not be required to write the exam; however, all new graduates, and individuals coming into SCoP will have to write the exam prior to licensing.

The exam is intended to ensure that standard to entry into the profession is met.

New EMRs will be required to write the new exam beginning April 1. The exams will take place in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert/SIAST. The cost of writing the EMR exam will be \$300, which is the same amount as the PCP and ACP exams have been in the past.