

## **The Pfizer Bowl of Hygeia Award in Canada - Fifty years and counting**

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### **What is the Bowl of Hygeia?**

The pharmacy profession has used numerous symbols over the centuries. These symbols include, but are not limited to, the mortar and pestle, the Rx sign, various alchemical symbols, the show globe, the green cross, the salamander, "A" for apothecary (Apotheke), and the Bowl of Hygeia.

The Bowl of Hygeia is the most widely recognized international symbol for the profession of pharmacy today. Several sources indicate that the symbol may have been used as an emblem of St. John dating back to the first century A.D. This is based on the legend that a trophy containing poison was offered to the apostle. There is also speculation that the Bowl of Hygeia was used as a symbol for the apothecaries of Italy in 1222 since they used this symbol during the celebration of the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the University of Padua. However, no proof has been found to substantiate either of these claims. We do know that the Bowl of Hygeia was associated with pharmacy as early as 1796 when the symbol was used on a coin minted for the Parisian Society of Pharmacy.

The Bowl of Hygeia originated from Greek mythology and is universally depicted as a snake wrapped around a bowl. Aesculapius (pronounced Es-Kah-Lay-Pi-Ous and sometimes spelled Asklepios) was the Greek god of medicine and healing. He was the son of Apollo who was the son of Zeus. Zeus became afraid the Aesculapius would render all men immortal because of his healing power so he killed him with a thunderbolt. Temples were built for Aesculapius and harmless serpents were found inside. These serpents appeared dead because they were stiff, however when picked up and dropped, they slithered away. The people at that time thought the serpents were brought back to life by the healing powers of Aesculapius which ultimately caused them to become the symbol of healing.

Hygeia, the daughter of Aesculapius and the goddess of Health, is usually depicted with a serpent around her arm and a bowl in her hand because she tended to the temples containing these snakes. We have since separated the serpent and the bowl from Hygeia, and this has become the internationally recognized symbol of pharmacy. Now the bowl represents a medicinal potion and the snake represents healing. Healing through medicine is precisely why pharmacy has adopted the Bowl of Hygeia symbol. Many pharmacy associations around the world have adopted the Bowl of Hygeia as their symbol to represent the pharmacy profession.

### **What is the Bowl of Hygeia Award?**

The Bowl of Hygeia Award is a community service award and is represented by a 10" by 13" mahogany plaque, upon which is mounted a brass casting of the Bowl of Hygeia with an engraved plate containing the name of the recipient, the state or province presenting the award, and the date of the presentation. The programme was initiated by E. Claiborne Robins, then President of A.H. Robins Company, which was located in Richmond, Virginia. Mr. Robins, a pharmacist, was very involved in community service activities and desired to foster that same sort of feeling among pharmacists around the nation. In 1958, he developed the idea for the Bowl of Hygeia Award for pharmacists who possess outstanding records of civic leadership in their own communities.

The Bowl of Hygeia Award was presented for the first time on February 18, 1958, during the Iowa Pharmaceutical Association's Annual Convention in Des Moines. The recipient was Richard M Hoffman of Ottumwa, Iowa. In addition to Iowa, Louisiana, Oregon and Rhode Island also presented the Bowl of Hygeia award in 1958. The following year, associations in 27 other states and the District of Columbia made their initial presentation of the award. The award has been presented annually in every state, DC and Puerto Rico since 1967.

In 1961, the Bowl of Hygeia programme was expanded to include Canada when the Pharmaceutical Association of British Columbia presented the award to George T. Cunningham of Vancouver. The award has been presented annually in each of the 10 provinces since 1967 when Prince Edward Island made its first presentation.

In 1989, American Home Products acquired A. H. Robins, and Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories became the sponsor of the award. In 2002, to better reflect its heritage, American Home Products changed its name to Wyeth and Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories became Wyeth Pharmaceuticals. In Canada the award was run by Whitehall Robins another business unit of American Home Products. Whitehall Robins changed their name as well in 2004 to Wyeth Consumer Healthcare. Finally Pfizer purchased the Wyeth company in 2010 and now in Canada the award is under the care and sponsorship of Pfizer Consumer Healthcare. Fifty four years, four pharmaceutical companies and the Bowl of Hygeia is still going strong.

How are recipients selected?

Each recipient of the award is selected by the pharmacy association in his or her state or province, with the primary criteria being an outstanding record of community service and leadership. Selection committees are required to use the following criteria:

1. The recipient must be a pharmacist, licensed within the jurisdiction in which the award is made.
2. The recipient must be living. Awards are not presented posthumously.
3. The recipient has not previously received the award.
4. The recipient is not currently serving, nor has he/she served with the immediate past two years, on its wards committee or as an officer of the association in other as an ex officio capacity.
5. The recipient has completed an outstanding record of community service, which apart from his/her specific identification as a pharmacist, reflects well on the profession.

Historically, most winners of the Bowl of Hygeia Award are community pharmacy who advance the standards of pharmacy. In addition to service through their local, state/provincial and national pharmacy associations, award recipients have devoted their time, talent, and resources to a wide variety of interests. Some have represented their respective communities in municipal or provincial government positions. Still, others have filled important positions on planning committees for their local hospital, school and other organizations. They have provided leadership for fund drives and countless special projects and have participated in the work of youth organizations, civic clubs, churches, and fraternal clubs. It is safe to say that over the years, Bowl of Hygeia Award recipients have been honoured for virtually every type of community service.

In most states / provinces, the nominations for the award are prepared secretly. A peer or colleague of a deserving pharmacist will nominate that individual on the basis of his/her community service involvement. Leaders involved in the state/provincial pharmacy associations select the winner and do not announce the results until the state/provincial pharmacy associations meeting where the Bowl of Hygeia Award is presented. Usually, the family of the award winner is invited as well. Typically the Bowl of Hygeia Award is normally considered on the highlight awards at each state or provincial pharmacy association meeting.

Each state/provincial pharmacy association presents the award in a unique manner, and in Canada a Pfizer Consumer Healthcare Medical representative will read a short biographical sketch on the winner and present the plaque to the deserving pharmacist.

In addition to the plaque, since 2002 each of the Bowl of Hygeia Award winners are also presented with a lapel pin at a subsequent event, which are scale replicas of the mahogany plaques. As well a special distribution of lapel pins was made to all pharmacists who had

received the award in prior years. There is an actual Bowl of Hygeia which was made by a Mexican silversmith and given to the A. H. Robins company by its Latin American representatives in 1953. Many previous Bowl of Hygeia Award winners have had their photographs taken beside this beautiful silver bowl.

In conjunction with the special salute, Pfizer sponsors a full page pharmacy journal advertisement that features photographs of the current year winners indicating that these pharmacists have been cited for outstanding service to their respective communities.

### **Who are the Recipients?**

Those chosen by their peers to receive the Bowl of Hygeia Award have ranged from young men and women in the early stages of their careers to long-time practitioners who have reached the top of their profession. Perhaps a quarter of the over 2000 North American recipients thus far have headed up their respective state or provincial pharmacy associations at one time or another. In fact many of the Canadian provincial Bowl of Hygeia Award winners have served as the president of the Canadian Pharmacists Association.

### **Family Affairs?**

On a number of occasions, the Bowl of Hygeia Award has been presented first to one, then another member of the same family. Father first then daughter or son second or brother – brother or brother – sister, even husband and wife at different times. In fact many women have received the award over the years starting for the first time in 1959 in Utah and in 1964 in Nova Scotia when Elisha Dimock Hines received the award.

Fifty years of presentations makes the Pfizer Consumer Healthcare Bowl of Hygeia Award one of the longest standing continuously presented pharmacy awards in Canada. We are all very proud of its fine heritage and of course the outstanding provincial winners of the Bowl of Hygeia Award.