

# Pharmacy Technicians are Key

What is a pharmacy technician?

by Deb Saeger, CPhT

**P**harmacy technicians are the “heart” of the pharmacy—from the very first “pump” of a business or a hospital; technicians are KEY to work flow and quality assurance. Technicians keep the “flow” in the pharmacy and allow the pharmacist to do his/her job more effectively, thus improving the quality of care. What are some of the duties for pharmacy technicians? They take care of patient calls, patient drop-offs, insurance issues, clerking, inputting prescriptions into the computer, filling prescriptions, inventory control, handling drug shortages, ordering and checking-in medication, shelving medication, restocking carts, preparing sterile products, assisting with compounding, obtaining refills from prescribers (when there are no changes) and much more. With pharmacy days being busy, how can you, the technician, stay organized, help prevent audits and promote quality care?

## Here are some tips:

- Keep the pharmacy free from clutter—this will make working easier for everyone on the pharmacy team, as well as help avoid possible filling errors.
- Remember—patients and other health care providers may want their prescriptions or medication orders quickly, but it is important for you to be focusing on the QUALITY of the work as well as the QUANTITY and how fast products are prepared—people’s lives depend on you!!
- Work as a team—Keep everyone accountable. If someone is using shortcuts or deviating from a standard procedure, remind that person of the importance of doing things properly so that the quality of care offered in the pharmacy continues to be top-notch. Patient safety is everyone’s job!
- When a patient comes to your window to drop-off a prescription—verify the patient’s name, address, phone number, date of birth, allergies (allergies can change), insurance information and weight if a pediatric patient. While this may seem time-consuming to you, this becomes a pro-active effort to ensure quality care is provided.
- Double check your work when putting information into the computer for the prescription order. Be sure you have the proper drug and strength selected. Be sure you input the written date (if different

from today’s date), quantity being prescribed and appropriate refills. Also, check the prescriber—is it the prescriber who wrote the prescription? Are the NPI and DEA numbers correct for this prescriber? The few extra minutes it takes at the input station may save the pharmacy thousands of dollars in the event of an audit.

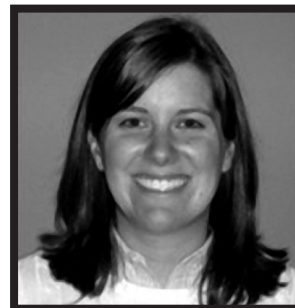
- If you see a DUR alert for a possible drug interaction or allergy, let the pharmacist know right away. This promotes quality and patient safety. Patients do not always understand how medications work together and a pharmacist can provide education to the patient to ensure they receive quality care. This is an area where a pharmacy practice can shine and show patients that their pharmacy team is working for them.
- If a prescription order indicates the patient should “use as directed,” let the pharmacist know and have them obtain appropriate directions before filling it. This will make certain the proper amount of medication is dispensed; as well as allow the pharmacy to calculate the appropriate day supply—once again, reducing issues in a future audit.
- Compare the quantity ordered by the prescriber to the amount allowed by the patient’s insurance plan. Sometimes prescribers will order more than the plan allows. Be extra careful not to enter a 30-day supply for an order that is not written for a 30-day supply.
- When pulling bottles, putting drug orders on the shelves or restocking carts and automated dispensing machines, have a system to separate or flag “look-alike, sound-alike” medications to avoid possible misfills. Taking the time to do this can prevent patient harm.
- Work WITH your pharmacist! Offer to resolve insurance issues, so the pharmacist can focus on his/her professional responsibilities and patient care. Ideally, the pharmacist should not be performing technical duties that can be performed by the pharmacy technician—check out WI Phar 7.015 which details all tasks a Wisconsin pharmacy technician can do.

You are the KEY to the pharmacy practice! Pharmacists could not do all that is expected without good, competent help—that’s you—the pharmacy technician!! ●

Deb Saeger is an audit analyst for PAAS National®, Pharmacy Audit Assistance Service, in Stoughton, WI.

PSW WELCOMES

KATIE SCHMIDT, PSW EDUCATION AND MEETINGS COORDINATOR



Katie Schmidt joins the staff of PSW as the Education and Meetings Coordinator. Schmidt will provide support in the development and execution of PSW’s educational programming, conferences and other events.

Schmidt grew up in the Chicago area and graduated in 2007 from the University of Iowa with a Bachelors in Business Administration with a focus on marketing and international business. Since that time, she has been working with an electronic health records (EHR) vendor where she met with physicians, designed EHR systems to meet the needs of health care providers and focused on the patient’s interaction with an EHR to meet “Meaningful Use” requirements enacted by CMS this year.

“I am very excited to begin working at PSW and plan exciting events for the pharmacists across the state,” says Schmidt.

Katie enjoys spending time with her fiancé, Kurt, and their families and enjoys learning new recipes to cook for family occasions. She is enjoying planning her wedding at the moment and is looking forward to getting a puppy this fall. ●



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& 27,  
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