

Performance Strategies

for Healthcare Leaders



Power Your Pharmacy to Achieve Safety and Efficiencies

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Advanced Technology Helps Advance the Contribution of the Hospital Pharmacy



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An Accelerating Rate of Change

Incentives from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) are helping to create a wave of healthcare IT implementation activity. In all likelihood, we will see more IT adoption in healthcare in the next five years than in the previous 20. Physicians and nursing staff will increasingly incorporate healthcare IT into their daily workflow, creating greater opportunity for pharmacists to be more engaged in an organization's medication use process.

Prior to the creation of [Electronic Health Records](#) (EHRs), it was a cumbersome process for the pharmacist to access each patient's paper record for medication review. Identifying which patients could benefit from a pharmacist's intervention was like finding the proverbial needle in a haystack. Outside of patient rounds, the pharmacist typically had to track down physicians and nurses to communicate concerns and recommendations.

The EHR has the potential to change all that. Properly configured, the EHR can serve as the pharmacist's "eyes and ears" on the entire medication use process, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Now the pharmacist is in a position to make a much greater contribution to the multidisciplinary care team. It is imperative that pharmacists participate in configuring and maintaining an organization's EHR to optimize pharmaceutical care for every patient.

Across Care Settings

[Computerized physician order entry](#) (CPOE) enables drug orders to instantly come into the pharmacy in an electronic format, eliminating transcription-related errors. Integration of CPOE and the pharmacy information system provides a unique opportunity to incorporate drug therapy best practices, guidelines for use, and surveillance related to medication safety and utilization into the EHR. Technology enables pharmaceutical care to begin at the inception of a drug order and continue with electronic monitoring through a therapy's completion. A properly configured EHR can instantly identify situations that require the pharmacist's clinical expertise, thereby improving patient care and enhancing the pharmacist's efficiency.

Workflow is also changing for many nurses with the move away from centralized nursing units with paper charts, corded phones and fixed computers. The EHR will provide nurses with the entire medical record, updated in real time at or near the patient bedside. As the nurse's workflow and work environment change, it is likely their interactions with pharmacy will change as well.

Working as a Team

The EHR will ultimately cross all disciplines in a hospital. In order for EHR adoption to be successful, each institution must view the transition as a multidisciplinary issue. This approach means that the walls that have so long separated – and isolated – departments must be broken down in favor of a broader and more effective approach. These teams can provide a powerful means of evaluating patient care workflows from end to end and identifying ways to improve safety and efficiency.

Perhaps one of the largest contributions that IT, automation and distribution solutions can make is in the area of efficiency and time saving. When pharmacists spend less time on the dispensing function, they have more time to spend on patient care. They can apply their extensive training, education and experience to optimizing drug therapy.

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Advanced Technology Helps Advance the Contribution of the Hospital (Cont.)

EHRs also bring an unprecedented level of transparency to every department within the hospital, including the pharmacy. The data collected by the EHRs can be analyzed to bring a high level of clarity to healthcare processes. When everyone has a single source for truth, misunderstanding and misconceptions quickly give way to greater efficiency and effectiveness. Instead of wading through mounds of reports and discovering negative trends long after they have started, dashboard alerts allow for near real-time monitoring. Such transparency can serve as a powerful agent of change.

Closing the Medication Loop

The rollout of EHRs will also help hospitals realize another very important goal. While the core of ARRA is the implementation of EHRs in hospitals and physician offices, its requirements also lay the foundation for a closed-loop medication system. All of these advances will change the way pharmacists work in new and fundamental ways. The result will be professionals that are firmly integrated into the care process and better able to share their training and experience with colleagues. That's an approach with real benefits for both caregivers and patients alike.

Kevin Scheckelhoff serves as Vice President of Medication Safety Solutions at McKesson Provider Technologies. He has 32 years of pharmacy experience and received his degree in Pharmacy as well as his Masters in Business Administration from The Ohio State University. He is an active member of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) and participates in the ASHP Section on Pharmacy Informatics and Technology.

Top 8 Dimensions of Achieving Pharmacy High Performance

The [High Performance PharmacySM project](#), an ongoing initiative of the Health Systems Pharmacy Executive Alliance has identified eight areas or “dimensions” where hospital pharmacies can enhance their performance. The 8 dimensions are:

- > [Leadership](#)
- > [Medication preparation and delivery](#)
- > [Patient care services](#)
- > [Medication safety](#)
- > [Medication use policy](#)
- > [Financial performance](#)
- > [Human Resources management](#)
- > [Education](#)

Building on the 8 dimensions, the Executive Alliance has developed a [High Performance Pharmacy Study](#) based on literature review and the collective experience of the alliance. The study identifies more than 70 performance elements — structures, policies, procedures, activities, and best practices that serve as indicators of high performance and result in a financial or clinical return on investment of resources.

“The High Performance Pharmacy approach is about never accepting the status quo,” says Joe Ness, MHA, RPh, vice president of Ancillary and Support Services for Southwest Washington Medical Center. It’s about continually looking at whether you have the right mix of people, processes, and technologies in place to provide patients with the highest quality care.”

To see where your pharmacy stands, use an [interactive assessment tool](#) that helps you identify improvement areas for achieving high performance. You also can see an [assessment of the value of each of the eight dimensions](#).

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