Advanced Pharmacy Technician Role

Lead Pharmacy Technician

Aurora Medical Center
Grafton, WI

Primary Intended Outcomes

• Support Director of Pharmacy by guiding daily pharmacy technician operations
• Ensure other pharmacy technicians have the resources and training necessary to perform their jobs effectively
• Ensure patients have access to their medications

Site Description

• Built in 2010, Aurora Medical Center Grafton is one of 15 hospitals in the Aurora Health Care System. The Hospital is licensed for 122 beds, including intensive care beds, inpatient medical/surgical beds, labor and delivery beds, a Level II Neonatal ICU, and an emergency room. There are also operating rooms, cardiac catheterization labs, specialty provider offices, and a clinic pharmacy on site.
• The hospital pharmacy department employs 9 pharmacy technician FTE and 9.5 pharmacist FTE. Pharmacists provide decentralized clinical services.
• The pharmacy is open 24 hours-a-day and also provides off-hours support for three other hospitals that do not provide 24-hour pharmacy services
• The majority of non-sterile medication dispensing is automated with carousel technology and automated dispensing cabinets
• All pharmacy technicians prepare sterile products, manage unit-dose distribution, and obtain medication histories from patients admitted to the hospital. Each day, two pharmacy technicians work the morning shift, two work the evening shift, and one works overnight.

Advanced Role Description

• The Lead Pharmacy Technician role is comprehensive and includes responsibility for drug purchasing, drug shortage management, drug recall audits, completion of controlled substance audits, oversight of USP Chapter <797> compliance, and components of technician training

Visit: www.pswi.org for more information about the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin and their pharmacy advancement initiatives.
• Drug purchasing responsibilities include daily ordering, monitoring for drug shortages, and transfer of drugs throughout the multihospital system as needed
• Drug recall audit responsibilities include review of drug recall notices and evaluation of current inventory
• Controlled substance audit responsibilities include daily controlled substance inventory discrepancy resolution and review of monthly diversion analytics reports
• USP Chapter <797> compliance responsibilities include evaluation of guideline compliance at the local level and education of other technicians when procedures change
• The Lead Pharmacy Technician also supports other pharmacy technicians by filling in when needed, providing hands-on training, and coordinating training schedules. The Aurora Health Care system has a robust centralized technician training program, including eight different classes on a variety of pharmacy topics like regulatory compliance, sterile and non-sterile compounding, pharmacy automation, hazardous medications, and medication safety, to name a few. The Lead Technician assesses baseline skill level for new technicians and schedules new technicians to attend appropriate training programs at the centralized training site. The Lead Technician also trains new technicians on pharmacy operations at the local hospital level.
• Other responsibilities include:
  o Management of patient-specific, limited distribution medications shipped directly to the hospital
  o Modification of drug inventory in automated dispensing systems when formulary changes occur
  o Data entry into the track and trace software for supply chain management
  o Interviewing applicants for pharmacy technician positions
• The lead technician typically works 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM Monday through Friday and does not work nights or weekends

**Necessary Tools and Resources**

- Desktop computer and telephone
- Drug purchasing software
- Controlled substance auditing software

**Training and/or Education Requirements**

- Pharmacy technician certification required*
- Knowledge of all technician roles
- Beneficial skills include: ability to manage data in spreadsheets, run an effective meeting, give effective feedback, and utilize project management techniques

*Technician certification is not currently required by the state of Wisconsin for pharmacy technicians
Outcome Measures

- Six additional controlled substance audits were added and compliance with all regulations has been maintained since starting the Lead Technician role
- Drug shortages impacting patient care have been decreased significantly by working closely with Aurora’s centralized drug shortage management team
- Pharmacy technician overtime has decreased because the Lead Technician can fill in when needed
- Caregiver engagement has increased due to the increased support and availability of resources to help ensure patients are able to obtain the medications they need

Lessons Learned

- It is important to clearly define the degree of supervisory authority given to the Lead Technician. At Aurora Medical Center Grafton, the Lead Technician does not have supervisory authority, but is well-respected by pharmacist and technicians alike.
- It is important to continually reevaluate whether additional responsibilities can be delegated to the Lead Technician in order to continue to advance the role