Advanced Pharmacy Technician Role

Pharmacy Purchaser

Aurora BayCare Medical Center
Green Bay, WI

Primary Intended Outcome(s)

• Short term goals: to ensure drug inventory is adequate to meet the needs of day-to-day operations, confirm drug products and corresponding barcodes are entered into the formulary database for patient safety, and monitor and communicate drug shortages with appropriate staff

• Long term goals: to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements, optimize inventory management with par level adjustments, and maintain good working relationships with key stakeholders

Site Description

• Aurora BayCare Medical Center is a 167 bed acute tertiary care hospital located in Green Bay, WI. Aurora BayCare provides extensive services including cancer care, heart, lung and vascular services, orthopedics, complete women’s health services, and pain and rehabilitation services

• The pharmacy enterprise at Aurora BayCare Medical Center consists of 1 management FTE, 1 Clinical/Residency Coordinator, 14 pharmacist FTE, and 15 technician FTE (0.8 of this technician FTE devoted to the Pharmacy Buyer position)

• Aurora BayCare Medical Center currently has an EHR system, as well as automated dispensing cabinets and medication distribution technology

Advanced Role Description

• Manage all aspects of daily medication orders from wholesaler

• Place specialty drug orders through outside vendors

• Coordinate medication procurement for local clinics, EMS, and fire departments

• Ensure all medication barcodes are in the formulary database to support BCMA

• Optimize medication inventory par levels to avoid stockouts and reduce waste

• Record necessary information for compliance with the Drug Supply Chain Security Act

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• Oversee controlled substances ordering and required documentation
• Monitor, communicate, and manage drug shortages
• Lead biannual medication inventory
• Submit new medications to IT for addition to the EHR to support CPOE
• Attend weekly system-level buyer call
• Handle formulary change management process

Necessary Tools and Resources
• Desktop computer, telephone, email, and instant messaging system
• Automated dispensing cabinet vendor reports
• Online access to drug wholesaler portal
• Access to health system’s pharmacy shared drive
• Weekly health system drug shortage spreadsheet
• Controlled substance ordering system to submit electronic CII medication orders

Training and/or Education Requirements
• Aurora Health Care has a system-level technician career ladder with two levels
• Certification, leadership skills, advanced knowledge, and ability to train other technicians among other attributes are prerequisites to become a Technician II
• To be successful in this position, a technician must have an interest in purchasing in addition to possessing effective communication skills, the ability to solve problems and process information, and the ability to build cooperative relationships

Revenue and Expense Parameters & Outcome Measures
• Operational outcomes are assessed to evaluate this position
• Inventory turns
• Avoiding stockouts
• Reduction of medication waste
• Provider satisfaction with drug shortages communications and alternative solutions
• High-cost drug evaluations
• Purchasing workload shifted from the responsibilities of pharmacy department managers

Preparing for Role Implementation/Lessons Learned
• Depending on the size of the hospital, a partial FTE or having purchasing as an additional duty may be more appropriate
• Developing a dedicated technician with purchasing duties encourages ownership of inventory management and standardizes communications
• The technician involved needs to be able to think critically and be a problem-solver
• Administration wants to see cost savings, so removing the responsibility of purchasing

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• from pharmacists and department leaders allows for reallocation of time to activities better suited to their skill set
• Include the purchasing technician in evaluations of high-cost medications
• Initially, a technician may require a significant amount of mentoring to understand the importance of inventory management and to be comfortable utilizing analytics
• Involve medical staff for support when explaining importance of managing drug shortages and detailing the required time commitment to hospital administration

Realized Benefits
• Patient care
  o The development of the Pharmacy Purchaser position’s purpose was to move a pharmacist out of this operationally-focused position to more clinically-focused work, when a more cost-effective resource (pharmacy technician) can effectively perform this type of work
  o Clinicians depend on pharmacy to have an adequate inventory of medications to treat patients
  o With expertise in purchasing, this position monitors and anticipates drug shortages, developing solutions before drug stocks are critically depleted
  o This position ensures all medication products and corresponding barcodes are correctly entered into the EHR to support patient safety technology like CPOE and BCMA
• Operations
  o The Pharmacy Purchaser position manages the drug inventory, adjusting par levels as needed to meet the needs of the department to avoid stockouts and decreasing medication waste
  o The person in the Pharmacy Purchaser position is familiar with the alternative procurement methods for specialty products
  o Pharmacy Purchaser is a resource for other technicians regarding pharmacy operations
• Interdisciplinary relationships
  o The Purchaser frequently communicates with pharmacy staff, providers, nursing staff, and clinic staff about drug shortages and other inventory-related issues
  o Meaningful work relationships have been formed through this position

Future Opportunities
• Optimize inventory
  o Use Lean principles to provide Just-In-Time inventory to remote stocked areas
  o Proactively use reports to minimize excessive stock
• Operational improvements
  o Utilize Value Stream Mapping to improve efficiency in pharmacy operations

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- Perform project management approaches to any changes in operations
- Take the lead in identifying opportunities in process improvements
- Lead project management teams in implementing process improvement changes