

Practice Spotlight

Winslow Indian Health Care Center (WIHCC)
Winslow Indian Health Service Unit Pharmacy

Winslow, AZ

<http://www.wihcc.com/>

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IN YOUR VIEW, HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THE IDEAL PRACTICE ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE?

The ideal practice advancement initiative provides a service(s) to improve patient care, outcomes, and satisfaction. The initiative should also allow for pharmacists to fully utilize and grow their clinical knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the initiative should have interprofessional and administrative support.

HOW DO PHARMACISTS IN YOUR RE-DESIGNED PHARMACY PRACTICE ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE PROVIDE CARE TO PATIENTS AND ENSURE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE MEDICATION THERAPY?

Our pharmacists review patients' medical chart notes, laboratory data, and acute/chronic diagnoses via the Electronic Health Record (EHR) before verifying orders to ensure the patient is ordered the appropriate medications and dosage strength. If there is any question regarding an order, the pharmacist contacts the provider for clarification. These discussions vary; some examples include: omitted treatment for a hemodialysis patient with an elevated PTH level, alternative therapy

recommended for a chronic hepatic encephalopathy patient who could not tolerate lactulose treatment, and sub/supratherapeutic levels of phenytoin or lithium.

We have several pharmacist-managed clinics, with limited physician intervention. For example, the anticoagulation clinic (ACC) pharmacists fully manage patients' warfarin dosing, except in cases where a prescriber intervention is required (i.e. bleeding, active thrombosis while on anticoagulants, and extremely elevated INRs). Per our protocol, the pharmacist documents and discusses the patient's case with the Primary Care Provider (PCP) in those rare situations. Otherwise, warfarin dosing is adjusted without consultation with a PCP.

In our local dialysis clinic, a pharmacist accompanies two nephrologists on their monthly rounds. The pharmacist provides necessary information regarding the patients' medication records, refill data, and available formulary alternatives for new prescriptions. This also allows the pharmacist to facilitate medication compliance by discussing medication needs or questions with patients. The pharmacists also monitor refill history and laboratory values related to bone metabolism in order to recommend appropriate medication adjustments. Additionally, pharmacists help with basic nutritional support with liquid protein supplements at the hemodialysis center.

The pharmacy has taken the lead in promoting a monthly spirometry clinic to provide evidence-based diagnoses of asthma. The spirometry tests are conducted by a team consisting of a physician, a registered nurse, and a pharmacist. The long-term goal is to establish a pharmacy-run asthma clinic to provide in-depth asthma education and medication adjustments for spirometry-diagnosed asthma patients.

Lastly, the pharmacy team spearheaded the antibiotic stewardship program to improve the prescribing patterns for a selection of antibiotics and increase awareness of antibiotic resistance and development of *Clostridium difficile* infections in the region. The antibiotic stewardship program members consist of physicians, pharmacists, laboratory staff, infection prevention staff, and IT staff. The members have quarterly scheduled meetings to discuss antibiotic usage, chart reviews, antibiogram updates, infectious disease guideline updates, and areas of improvement. Thus far, the program has implemented a vancomycin order and monitor policy/procedure and, with the assistance of an infectious disease specialist, will work toward implementing a policy for respiratory infections (i.e., sinusitis, pharyngitis, bronchitis, acute otitis media), and urinary tract infections

Overall, through practice advancement initiatives, our rural health center provides many opportunities for pharmacists to deliver a high level of patient care to a medically underserved population

WHAT SERVICES HAVE YOU DETERMINED TO BE ESSENTIAL TO SUPPORT YOUR PHARMACY PRACTICE ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE?

We provide services to patients in a rural area. Due to the shortage of providers and lack of public transportation, many patients are not able to see a medical provider every month.

Pharmacists at WIHCC can provide essential services in-between PCP visits to help continuously improve patient outcomes and prevent patients from being lost to follow up. We currently have several pharmacist-managed clinics and programs, such as an anticoagulation and insulin titration program, an antimicrobial stewardship program, a transitional care program, and an asthma clinic. In addition, we are working on implementing collaborative practice agreements with providers in the behavioral health and congestive heart failure clinics. The pharmacy services provided at WIHCC have clearly demonstrated that they can improve patient outcomes, and, therefore, these services support our pharmacy practice advancement initiative.

WHAT TECHNOLOGIES HAVE YOU IMPLEMENTED WITHIN YOUR PRACTICE SITE TO FACILITATE YOUR PRACTICE ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE?

It is critical for pharmacists to embrace the use of technology to expand pharmacy services and clinical roles. Technology leverages pharmacy visibility. At WIHCC Pharmacy, our goal is to improve our outpatient pharmacy workflow efficiency, patient safety, and accessibility when implementing new technologies. Currently, we have technologies that help to improve the pharmacy workflow. With the fully automated robotic dispensing unit, we are able to automate up to sixty percent of our prescription volume. A staging and RFID-tracking will-call medication system offers an additional layer of patient safety by eliminating bagging errors. The system also improves staff efficiency and reduces patient wait time by making it easier to locate patients' bags, returning medications to stock, and performing point-of-sale transactions. Finally, a web-based patient ticketing and queuing system helps organize and triage the flow of patients through our pharmacy dispensing process. The system helps manage patient check-in and reduces the risk of HIPAA violations due to crowding at the pharmacy check-in windows. By providing real time tracking data of patient wait time, the queuing system allows us to shift more pharmacy staff to address areas of greatest need to improve the patient experience..

A pharmacist shortage is also a critical issue for rural healthcare facilities like ours. WIHCC Pharmacy addresses this issue by utilizing telepharmacy services to provide remote pharmacy services to two ambulatory care clinics on the Navajo reservation. The remote pharmacies are staffed by two pharmacy technicians whose role is to prepare and dispense medications to the patients. The telepharmacist provides prescription verification and face-to-face patient counseling via teleconference. With the advancements in technology surrounding medication distribution in the community pharmacy setting, our pharmacists can focus on providing direct patient care clinical services to our patients in need.

HOW WOULD YOU SHARE THE SUCCESSES OF YOUR PRACTICE ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE WITH OTHER PHARMACY DIRECTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS?

Our facility is one of several health care centers in the Navajo Area Indian Health Service (IHS). At the Quarterly Area Pharmacy & Therapeutic (P&T) meetings, periodic pharmacy chief conference calls, and regional continuing education events we are able to discuss updates, innovations, and troubleshooting advice for the practice advancement initiative. In addition, through the National Clinical Pharmacy Specialist (NCPS) program, national IHS sites can attain a common credentialing

standard for their various pharmacist-managed collaborative practice programs and provide guidance for other IHS facilities to follow suit.

WHAT ARE SOME KEY CONSIDERATIONS TO GAIN EMPLOYEE ACCEPTANCE AND BUY-IN TO IMPLEMENT A NEW PRACTICE ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE?

We always perform an assessment of needs to see how the new initiative fits into the organization's strategic goals. One important consideration is to ensure a proper alignment between the employee's skills and level of engagement and the new practice advancement initiative. Training is also very important, especially when there is a lack of expertise in-house to start the new program. WIHCC Pharmacy offers the opportunity for pharmacists to attend conferences and seminars in order to acquire the skills needed to launch new programs.

HOW DID YOU GAIN SUPPORT OF ADMINISTRATORS, PHYSICIANS, AND NURSING TO IMPLEMENT YOUR NEW PRACTICE ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE?

Good relationships and communication with Medical and Nursing leadership are essential for the implementation of the practice advancement initiative. We are very fortunate at WIHCC Pharmacy to have the support of the Medical and Nursing Departments when implementing new programs. We also were able to gather data to support the need for such programs. Data collected during the pilot phase allowed us to make the pitch for the new program. Data showing positive and significant impacts on patient care strongly supports the practice advancement initiative.

WHAT ARE SOME LESSONS LEARNED WHILE IMPLEMENTING YOUR PRACTICE ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHER PHARMACISTS?

Earning trust from the pharmacy department and other departments has helped with implementing new initiatives or programs. Also, knowing what areas each pharmacist is interested in and delegating to the right person is important. Assigning a pharmacist who is interested in congestive heart failure to run a mental health clinic is not ideal. Again, knowing how to collect, analyze, and present data correctly is essential. Program support can also be gained through the evidence of positive outcomes.