[PI-3] Case studies: use of clinical pharmacy technicians at the Phoenix VA Medical Center

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Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center is a 4 campus health system providing inpatient and outpatient care to veterans in central Arizona. In October 1998, a clinical technician program was developed with the following goals: shift operational duties from clinical pharmacists to qualified clinical technicians, integrate clinical technicians to support continuity of patient information flow, and increase clinical pharmacist availability for medication management opportunities. Although modified slightly from the initial plan, clinical technicians are now successfully integrated in both the outpatient and inpatient care service areas. In addition to enhancing medication management services, this has allowed our pharmacy service to better focus on the prevention of medication errors. Examples of the clinical technician's role in preventing, identifying, and resolving medication errors will be presented and discussed.

Learning objectives: 1. List 3 ways in which ambulatory care clinical pharmacy technicians can be utilized to improve patient care and decrease medication errors. 2. List 3 ways in which inpatient clinical pharmacy technicians can be utilized to improve patient care and decrease medication errors. 3. List 3 barriers to optimal utilization of clinical technicians.

Self assessment questions: (Multiple Choice) 1. In which of the following areas can clinical technicians be utilized to decrease medication errors? a. Anticoagulation clinic; b. Admission drug history and allergy assessment; c. Medication profile review; d. Renal dysfunction screening; e. All of the above. 2. Integration of clinical pharmacy technicians is designed to result in which of the following? a. Improved identification of medication errors; b. Improved prevention of medication errors; c. Increased job satisfaction for clinical pharmacists and clinical technicians; d. All of the above. 3. Which of the following are potential barriers to the optimal use of clinical technicians? a. Technician knowledge and training; b. Pharmacist attitudes; c. Legal regulations; d. All of the above.

Answers: 1. e; 2. d; 3. d.