2014 & Beyond: Advancing the Role of the Pharmacy Technician
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Demands on Pharmacists
Current State of the Pharmacy Tech Profession
Changes to come
Examine Possibilities for Pharmacy Techs

“The counting and pouring now often alleged to be the pharmacist’s chief occupation will in time be done by technicians and automation. The pharmacist of tomorrow will function by reason of what he knows, increasing the efficiency and safety of drug therapy and working as a specialist in his own right. It is this direction that pharmaceutical education must evolve without delay.”
—Linwood F. Tice, D.Sc., Dean, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science (1966)
A 2009 survey of pharmacists concluded that pharmacists spend:

- 16% of their time to direct patient care.
- 55% of their time is spent dispensing.
- 29% is spent on other duties, such as managerial tasks.


**Pharmacists’ time could be better used by focusing on error-prone aspects of medication use and delegating more dispensing functions to pharmacy technicians.” — Quote from PharmWorld Article


*IMS HEALTH and NACDS Economics Department.
Effects of Pharmacist Patient-Care

- 48 week study of a hospital pharmacy.
- The hospital had implemented tech-check-tech, allowing pharmacists to spend more time on patient care.
- In the additional pharmacist patient care time:
  - 1,296 drug errors intercepted by pharmacists, mostly prescribing errors
  - 33% of these errors would have caused patient harm including increased hospital stay, permanent harm, or possible death.

Source: University of California San Francisco School of Pharmacy, Pharmacy Services Department of Cedars Sinai Medical Center. Evaluation of the impact of pharmacists in the prevention of medication errors associated with prescribing and administration of medications in the hospital setting. 2006. www.pharmacy.ca.gov/meetings/agendas/06_jan_leg_mat4.pdf

Evolution of the Pharmacy Tech

- Profession continues to grow.
- Pharmacy tech scope of practice has not been sufficiently examined, and varies by state.
- Requirements to become a pharmacy tech vary widely by state in terms of training, certification, drug testing, etc.

Growth of the Profession

- 1996 – 150,000 techs
- 2012 – 350,000 techs
- Future – Expected 20-30% growth
State Pharmacy Tech Training Requirements Across the USA

- Certification 9%
- Formal Training Program 23%
- On the job 24%
- No training requirement 20%
- State administered test 4%

More than half of states now require certification OR formal training to become a pharmacy technician.

New Minnesota BoP Requirements Support National Efforts

- Effective January 1, 2014:
  - Newly registering pharmacy technicians must have completed a formal training program. There are two options:
    - Training program at a community/tech college
    - Employer based training program
  - Does not apply to current pharmacy technicians who have maintained their registration (Grandfathering).

Training Standardization

- By 2020, PTCB will require candidates for the CPhT exam to complete an ASHP accredited training program before being eligible to take the CPhT exam.
- American Society of Hospital System Pharmacists (ASHP) is currently the only agency that accredits pharmacy technician training programs.
- ASHP has comprehensive accreditation guidelines and a model curriculum which sets a professional standard for technician training.
Accreditation Requirements for Training Programs

- 600+ hours over at least 15 weeks.
- Learning must include lecture, simulation (lab), and experience (internship)
- Must have sufficient equipment for practice in class
- 45 required learning goals
- Student recruitment standards for institutions
- Programs must have an advisory committee of working pharmacists/pharmacy techs

More Training, Now What?

- Increased training requirements are likely to (over time) advance the pharmacy tech’s scope of practice. Tech-check-tech programs are likely to gain more popularity.
- 11 published studies have found that specially trained pharmacy techs are just as capable as pharmacists to check batch fills in an institutional setting.
- Overall accuracy rates are very similar:
  - Pharmacy Techs: 99.6%
  - Pharmacists: 99.3%

Conclusion

- Pharmacists need good technicians now more than ever.
- Industry changes are underway to advance the role of the pharmacy technician, first through enhanced training requirements, with advanced duties likely to follow.
- It’s a great time to be a pharmacy tech!