

Establishing the Role of Medically-Integrated Specialty Pharmacy Services and its Impact on Patients

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Background

Health system specialty pharmacy services are beneficial by increasing adherence, decreasing cost, and improving outcomes.¹ This new segment of the pharmaceutical industry is fast growing and an opportunity for pharmacists to make an impact on patients. In February of 2020 a survey involving 414 active specialty pharmacists showed 69% of pharmacists agreed administrative tasks interfere with providing patient care.² The survey further showed it was not uncommon for specialty prescriptions to take seven to ten days to fill.² This delay can lead to progression of a patient's disease and ultimately poor patient outcomes.² The first key takeaway from this survey was direct patient care was being sacrificed for timely administrative work such as prior authorizations and communication with insurance companies.² The second key takeaway was the apparent opportunities for improvement in the specialty fulfillment process.² Current literature discusses the potential benefit of utilizing an in-house specialty pharmacy service that is patient focused.^{3,4} The existing process used at St. Peter's Health (SPH) with specialty prescriptions requires these types of prescriptions to be sent to outside specialty pharmacies where it can take days to weeks for the medication to be received. Patients are then contacted by the fulfilling specialty pharmacy with information regarding the new medication and what to expect. However, patients have historically not been getting appropriately informed by fulfilling specialty pharmacies and thus end up contacting the SPH pharmacy for guidance. The specialty pharmacy service being developed at SPH will have the primary focus of improving time to treatment, clinical outcomes, and patient and provider satisfaction.

Objectives

Primary Objective: To evaluate the impact of medically-integrated specialty pharmacy service on patient safety and medication adherence.

Secondary Objectives:

1. Track pharmacist managed interventions
2. Decrease time from day prescription was received to time patient received medication
3. Decrease time between refills
4. Quantify cost savings to hospital and patient
5. Improve overall staff and provider satisfaction

Identified Areas For Patient Impact

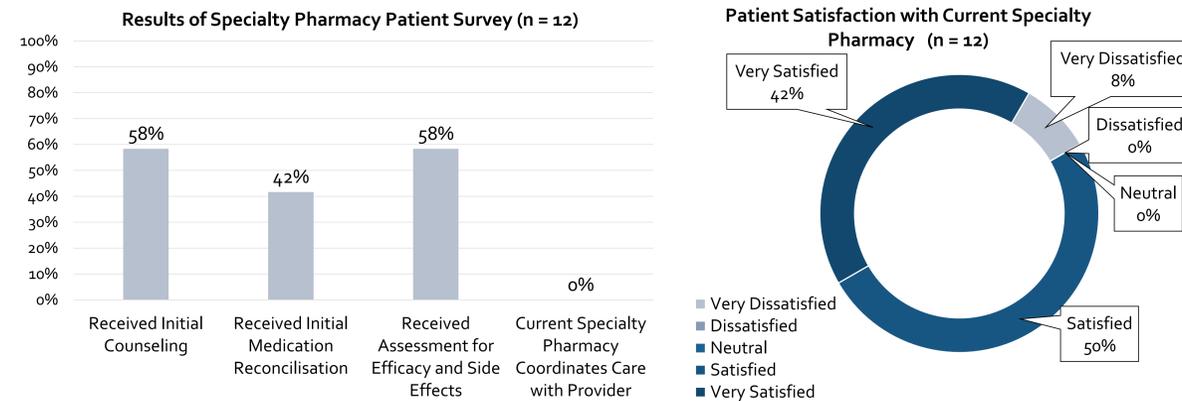
Identifying Eligible Patients	Coordinating Patient Care	Clinical Interventions
Patient Education and Counseling	Patient Monitoring and Follow-up	Financial Assistance
Prior Authorization Assistance	Refill Management	Adherence Management

Methods



Phase I: Baseline Data Collection

Patients currently prescribed a specialty medication by a SPH provider were contacted for a telephone survey to collect baseline data. A total of 35 patients were contacted and 12 were included for analysis.



Phase II: Project Development

- The following areas will need to be developed prior to implementation:**
- Background research
 - Stakeholder identification
 - Cost analysis
 - Creation of embedded pharmacy model
 - Establishment of specialty pharmacist responsibilities

Phase III: Project Implementation

Identify Patients

- Dedicated in-clinic pharmacist identifies patients taking eligible specialty medications

Benefits Investigation

- Utilize benefits investigations to prioritize patients that are eligible for conversion

Pharmacist Encounter

- Work with Provider / Clinical Staff on integration to meet with eligible patients
- Provide Rx counseling
- Conduct conversion conversation with patient
- Document conversion results and update patient status

First Fill

- Conduct Prior Authorizations
- Coordinate medication fill

Patient Monitoring

- Track pending patients requiring follow-up
- Conduct patient follow-ups during clinic visits to monitor pharmacotherapy needs and progress
- Address inquiries from clinic staff & providers

Refill Management

- Coordinate refill roadmap
- Secure refill prescriptions from patient providers
- Complete required Prior Authorizations and appeals

Phase IV: Data Analysis

- The following areas will be analyzed through a retrospective review:**
- Clinical interventions
 - Cost savings
 - Patient satisfaction surveying
 - Refill assessment
 - Adherence
 - Data reporting

Proposed Specialty Pharmacist Responsibilities

Develop and implement the following:

- Collaborative practice agreement(s)
- Policies, protocols, and guidelines
- Note templates for focused disease state(s)
- Patient education handout(s) and counseling
- Psychosocial assessment
- Initial dose optimization
- Side effect management
- Refill reminders
- Clinical interventions
- Adherence management
- Patient monitoring and follow up
- Data reporting
- Continuous quality improvement

Perform the following duties:

- Initial patient screening
- Initial medication reconciliation
- Initial medication counseling and education
- Scheduling/managing patient follow ups
- Coordinating care
- Continuous monitoring
- Scheduling necessary lab appointments
- Communicating therapy plan and lab results with referring provider
- Ensuring regimen is appropriate
- Obtaining specialty medication(s)
- Monitoring patient adherence
- Assessing tolerability
- Providing phone number to discuss concerns
- Optimizing treatment

Discussion

Utilizing a clinical pharmacist to manage the specialty pharmacy service will impact patients who require specialty prescriptions by offering a simplified fulfillment process, support service, and overall integrated care process. The purpose of developing and implementing this process will be to offer care support services and efficient fulfillment to achieve better patient outcomes.

References

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Author Disclosures

Authors of this presentation have the following to disclose concerning possible financial or personal relationships with commercial entities that may have a direct or indirect interest in the subject matter of this presentation: McKenzie Smith: Nothing to Disclose, Channa Richardson: Nothing to Disclose, Andrew Glueckert: Nothing to Disclose, Starla Blank: Nothing to Disclose