



MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF PHARMACY STUDENT WRITING CLUB:

Business Member Spotlight: Fort HealthCare Pharmacy

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Serving within the Fort Memorial Hospital in Fort Atkinson, Wis., Fort HealthCare's pharmacy services have been setting standards for rural pharmacy practice in Wisconsin since the 1950s. As the main hospital and only location with an inpatient pharmacy in Jefferson County, the Fort HealthCare system approaches rural pharmacy practice with an emphasis on patient safety and efficiency. The Fort HealthCare system is heavily involved in the well-being of its community and emphasizes the values of responsiveness, excellence, sensitivity, professionalism, empowerment, cultural diversity, and teamwork in its daily operations. With a modest team of six pharmacists, the pharmacy team at Fort Memorial Hospital takes pride in its ability to operate at a high level of effectiveness within an environment of limited resources, common in rural pharmacy practice.

Tyler J. Prickette, PharmD, BCSP, director of pharmacy at Fort HealthCare, shared his insight about the practice of pharmacy, innovations, and challenges that he and his team experience.

Day to Day Practice

The day-to-day workflow for pharmacy services within Fort HealthCare combines inpatient and outpatient responsibilities. With outpatient pharmacy services from 6:30 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. on weekdays, and 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekends and holidays, Fort HealthCare's pharmacy team works to prepare and dispense medications, evaluate evidence-based medication investigations, and direct patient follow-up plans in both outpatient and inpatient settings. The environment is professional but welcoming; each member of the team understands their responsibilities and collaborates with colleagues to provide outstanding healthcare. Pharmacists and technicians on the team at Fort HealthCare

are versatile, with the ability to adapt their workflow effectively as events arise. In spite of some downsides to a modestly sized pharmacy team, the small group size also creates more opportunities for team members. Many of the pharmacists are encouraged to precept students, identify gaps in patient care, suggest updates for policies and procedures, and provide education to other clinical staff. The technicians are invited to do the same, with the aim to innovate in the practice of pharmacy and raise it to new standards. For Prickette, who was appointed director of pharmacy in April 2022, the management of ambulatory and inpatient practices are integral parts of daily workflow. The tasks of filling empty roles in the patient care team and simultaneously advocating for patient safety keep the director of pharmacy busy, but the Fort HealthCare team strives to broaden the scope of its ambulatory care practice to disease states, after beginning with opioid use disorder and diabetes mellitus.

Raising the Bar

The Fort HealthCare pharmacy team aspires to nourish patient safety and increase workplace efficiency, while concurrently broadening the scope of Fort HealthCare's ambulatory pharmacy services. Safety measures such as enhanced barcode scanning and implementation of PharmacyKeeper in the sterile compounding room are innovations in rural healthcare that Fort HealthCare hopes to begin using to improve drug preparation and administration. Each member of the Fort HealthCare team is encouraged to maximize the scope of their practice, from pharmacists leading initiatives to include more diverse disease-state management in their practices to technicians learning how to apply their skills to other beneficial services, such as information technology. Prickette formerly

worked under a pain management pharmacy service and has been heavily involved in opioid stewardship throughout the state of Wisconsin, including efforts as a member of the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin's Opioid Stewardship Group. Serving a community of approximately 12,400 residents in the immediate Fort Atkinson area, Fort HealthCare pharmacy services allows its clinical pharmacists to apply their knowledge to multiple specialties, and modulate their responsibilities based on the challenges they face. Throughout medically underserved areas, such as Fort Atkinson and Jefferson County, pharmacists must be able to apply their clinical knowledge and experience to multiple disease states as a part of their daily practice, especially when compared to communities in which specialized pharmacists are more readily available. Adding a focus on disease states to the workload at Fort will require creativity and collaboration, but the team hopes that patient care quality will benefit dramatically from these endeavors.

Bumps in the Road

Implementation of innovations in any business practice comes with its challenges, and Fort HealthCare pharmacy services is no exception. Promotions in the department, compounded with the obstacles of working in a rural health center, have disrupted plans for advancement. Nevertheless, the Fort HealthCare pharmacy team is well equipped to face these challenges. The introduction of PharmacyKeeper, a technology not yet used at Fort HealthCare, is a challenge familiar to Prickette, who worked as a pharmacy intern with University of Wisconsin Health during their implementation of PharmacyKeeper. As the only hospital system in Jefferson County, the Fort HealthCare pharmacy team has the additional responsibility of caring for critically ill patients from any of

the county's 16 towns, while also pushing against the perception of pharmacists as strict drug-dispensing specialists. The expansion of the Fort HealthCare pharmacists' roles will hopefully bring a new perspective of the pharmacy profession to rural communities in a patient care role. Addressing the retail-centered generalization of the role of the pharmacist is a concern for the Fort HealthCare team. That generalization can only be countered through the implementation of new responsibilities for the pharmacists and advocacy for the profession of pharmacy on a state-wide scale.

Moving Forward

Prickette encourages those who want to practice in healthcare leadership to be open to new opportunities. The

successes that he celebrates today can be attributed to his willingness to accept new opportunities and approach novel challenges head-on. In his experience, the road to success is paved with how we respond to obstacles and address failure. The essence of the profession of pharmacy is that of leadership, and future pharmacists have the responsibility to shape how the practice is perceived. To him, the next several years of pharmacy practice will be abundant with opportunity and innovation, but not without their fair share of obstacles. The climbing prices of biologic medications, reimbursement for pharmacists' services, optimization of processes to reduce cost, and the generalization of pharmacists as drug-dispensing specialists are examples of obstacles Prickette aspires to confront in the coming years. Through the application

of the skills and knowledge gained through enhanced training, the traditional role of the pharmacist can be expanded to fill gaps in patient care, cutting costs for both healthcare facilities and patients. There is hope that the patient population will perceive the pharmacist as more than drug-dispensing specialists, and that the future generation of pharmacists will strive to innovate the practice of pharmacy through thoughtful considerations of the roles the pharmacist can fill.

Matthew DeSchepper and Bridget Nelson are 2024 Doctor of Pharmacy Candidates at the Medical College of Wisconsin School of Pharmacy in Milwaukee, WI.

Below: Fort HealthCare/Fort Memorial Hospital in Fort Atkinson, WI.



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