

## MEDICATION SAFETY

### Starting in Medication Safety? Some hints for early career pharmacists

# Collaboration is key: if you want to go fast, go alone — if you want to go far, go together



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Throughout my pharmacy career collaboration with pharmacy colleagues and health professionals has been essential to delivering the best outcomes. Hospital pharmacy is the perfect environment to work with like-minded health professionals to achieve the ultimate outcome: ensuring our patients receive high quality care.

As an early career pharmacist there were times when I felt that I needed to demonstrate my own ideas and achievements to get ahead.

**It doesn't matter what position you hold; you can always demonstrate leadership qualities and activities in the work that you do. Having an inquisitive mind and reviewing a process with a fresh lens is essential to quality improvement.**

However, if there is one thing I have learnt — as there are multiple layers to a problem — it is always better to get others involved to contribute and collaborate. This is important in order to have insight into why things are done a certain way. Having input from colleagues impacted by the process under review facilitates working towards a solution. Bringing people along the journey from problem to solution will create a common understanding of each group's needs and better engagement. You are then potentially creating champions to support the roll-out and embedding of any required changes.

There are many different change management models available, but the one that resonated with me is John Kotter's [8 steps to leading change](#).<sup>1</sup> If you have 10 minutes, there is a short video '[Our iceberg is melting](#)' based on a book by the same name which provides an illustration of Kotter's change management process.<sup>2</sup> I have found time and time again that these principles have provided a solid foundation for my work in the Medication Safety space.

This is especially relevant to quality improvement projects that have been initiated as a result of a clinical incident. The problem causing the incident is often multifactorial. Having a team which represents each aspect of the problem (medical, nursing, pharmacy, dieticians, consumer) can help highlight different perspectives of the problem. Otherwise, assumptions may be made about another clinician or group, which often leads to impractical solutions or disengagement for change.

So, my advice to early career pharmacists is to embrace the team spirit, ask questions around the 'why' and don't wait for the perfect solution. Instead start with an idea and then collaborate with others, to develop the best solution which will support quality and safe use of medicines for our patients.

## References

1. Kotter. The 8 steps for leading change. Kotter International Inc; 2023. Available from <https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>. Accessed 29 August 2023.
2. Kotter J, Rathgeber H. *Our iceberg is melting: Changing and succeeding under any conditions*. London: Pan Macmillan UK; 2017.