

Collaboration is key to Medication Safety

## Collaboration with our virtual team for medication safety

### Virtually everything is connected: embracing layered governance structures and keeping an ear to the ground



**Nam-Anh Nguyen**<sup>1,2</sup> BPharm (Hons), Grad Dip Hosp Pharm, Dip Lead Mgmt, FANZCAP (MedsMgmt, MedSafety), MSHP

1. Medication Safety Leadership Committee
2. Medicines Management Pharmacist, WA Country Health Service

---

Medication safety programs are more meaningful when there is real connection and collaboration between frontline staff and changemakers. Problems, concerns, and risks are identified best by staff working on the ground. Effective governance structures and escalation pathways provide a platform to raise issues with relevant stakeholders and committees, which can then respond and enact change on a broader scale.

Governance structures, namely Medicines and Therapeutics Committees (MTCs) and Medication Safety Committees (MSCs), drive healthcare organisations in achieving national standards for medicines management<sup>1</sup> and safety.<sup>2</sup> Organisations are uniquely structured and leveraging the layers of governance is nuanced, yet possible.

The Western Australian Country Health Service (WACHS) provides care across seven regions, spanning more than 2.5 million km<sup>2</sup> and 100 sites. Each region has its own MTC made up of clinicians and senior staff from various disciplines. Matters are resolved locally and, where needed, a WACHS-wide approach is sought for consistency and equity of care. This is achievable through the sound working relationship between local MTCs and the WACHS-wide committees. Additionally, the WACHS-wide MSC is represented by WACHS-wide programs or services such as mental health, aged care, and virtual care to focus on specific areas of clinical care or service models, such as telehealth.

What gets tabled at committees needs to be informed and relevant. Committee members listen to what staff report as their problems and challenges. We hear, often, that opportunities for improvement in one region are relevant across the organisation.

## Hybrid service and care models to extend reach and impact

Local pharmacy teams provide excellent support within their region, and we continually seek new ways to better support them centrally. WACHS Pharmacy Services and the Command Centre's Virtual Clinical Pharmacists (VCP) provide a hybrid service enabling them to extend their reach and impact. The VCPs work remotely to conduct medication reconciliation, medication reviews, patient education, and to support staff in managing high risk medicines. VCPs also work on site, implementing practical changes such as imprest optimisation and medication storage enhancements.

Command Centre Lead Pharmacist Nikki Reynolds said that the impact of VCPs relies on their embeddedness in organisation-wide governance and ability to effect organisation-wide change:

*"In my hybrid virtual role, I'm in a perfect limbo where I can appreciate what's happening on the ground, yet I am connected to the right governance structures to allow me to translate those struggles into meaningful changes at the organisation-wide level"*

Nikki led the standardisation of the Emergency Telehealth Service Imprest List, to rationalise prescribing and provide assurance for site stockholdings. Knowing that the list had gone through the right governance processes, developed collaboratively by Command Centre and Pharmacy, and endorsed by the WACHS-wide MSC, local teams without at smaller sites, such as the remote town of Paraburdoo, had complete confidence that the changes to their imprest reflected a move towards consistency and best practice.

With good governance structures, where clinicians are either well represented and empowered to connect with them, medication safety programs are agile, informed and meaningful in reducing medication safety risks and enhancing patient outcomes.

---

## References

1. Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups (CATAG). *Achieving effective medicines governance*. Darlinghurst: CATAG; 2013.
  2. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC). *Medication Safety Standard*. In: *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards*. Sydney: ACSQHC; 2021.
-