



Collaboration is key to Medication Safety

## Collaboration with pharmacy technicians and assistants is key for medication safety



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Medication safety is the business of everyone involved in medication management and pharmacy technicians and assistants, as part of the pharmacy and health care team, play a pivotal role in improving medication safety to 'get it right'. Traditional technician roles in medicines distribution and storage are integral for compliance with the [Medication Safety Standard](#).<sup>1</sup> Effective stock management, imprest service, dispensing, and compounding are part of the pharmacy technician's everyday responsibilities and essential to reduce and prevent medication errors.

*Tasmanian Pharmacy Technician: "I believe my role as a ward-based pharmacy technician reduces the risk of medication errors. Any problems found on my daily chart review are rectified in a timely manner contributing to patient safety".*

Some of these traditional medication management roles have moved into the wards, resulting in more timely supply of medicines, reducing delays and medication omissions, by ensuring the right medication is available at the right time. In addition, ward-based technicians reduce waste and improve medication storage, giving back time for nurses to perform other duties.

*Tasmanian Nurse: "Improved efficiency and safety. Previously large amounts of my time were spent on medication management, now I can focus on other clinically aspects of nursing and know if I need a medicine, it will be available..."*

Expansion of scope in the dispensary has seen checking technicians undertaking the final check of medicines leaving the pharmacy. Embedded in international practice for many years, this process is becoming more routine in Australian hospitals. Pharmacy

technicians and assistants have high levels of accuracy, and their role in the dispensary releases pharmacists for clinical tasks, resulting in medication safety benefits.

Emerging roles in clinical areas provide medication safety benefits both for patients and health care teams. With pharmacist workforce shortages, pharmacy technicians offer an important opportunity to improve medication safety by working in partnership with pharmacists to provide an additional safety barrier. The value of pharmacy technicians undertaking medication reconciliation with a Best Possible Medication History (BPMH), is supported by evidence.<sup>2,3</sup> Prescribing errors on admission are detected earlier, with timelier referral to a pharmacist. Advanced technician-led BPMH assists the pharmacist to prioritise medicine-related issues, freeing time to focus on clinical review.

*Tasmanian Doctor: "More efficient service with information available more readily for effective admissions and discharges. Greater access to pharmacy service on wards"*

Advanced scope pharmacy technicians assist in improving communication within the health care team. By attending handover and discharge planning meetings, pharmacy technicians and assistants can facilitate discharges and inpatient medicine supply. Depending on their scope of practice, pharmacy technicians may also be able provide medicines information and medication lists to patients.

It is essential that all pharmacy technician and assistant roles are supported with education and training, along with appropriate credentialing, to ensure patient safety. Specific education should include medication safety topics such as time critical medicines, high risk medicines, interpretation of medication charts, and use of approved medical terminology and abbreviations.

Empowering pharmacy technicians and assistants to speak up for patient safety should be promoted to ensure these valuable members of the pharmacy workforce continue to maximise medication safety.

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## References

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