



Collaboration is key to Medication Safety

Collaboration with the Safety and Quality Unit is key for medication safety

Medication safety across the Standards



Kerry Fitzsimons^{1,2} BPharm, MClinPharm, FSHP

1. Medication Safety Leadership Committee
2. Manager, Medicines and Technology Unit, Patient Safety and Clinical Quality Directorate

When I started preparing for my first accreditation cycle, I naïvely thought that all I needed to do was focus on the Medication Safety [Standard 4](#) requirements. The Safety and Quality Unit Manager at Fremantle Hospital brought me into the fold showing me how the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards¹ were intertwined, each with core actions, but with connecting themes. It was then that it hit me; I would require a 'systems' approach much broader than medication management alone.

Medication safety intersects with all eight standards by ensuring sound clinical governance of medicines through the Medicines and Therapeutics Committee and Medication Safety Committee (Standard 1), and by focusing on consumer-centred care and consumer engagement within decision making (Standard 2), and antimicrobial stewardship (Standard 3). Medication safety also features in end-of-life care, monitoring and managing patient risk including medicine-related falls and delirium, medicine management of agitation and arousal (Standard 5), the safe and effective communication for clinical handover and documentation of medicines through prescribing, administering, dispensing, and monitoring (Standard 6), and blood management and supporting patients with iron infusions to preserve the limited blood reserves prior to surgery (Standard 7). Finally, detecting medicines involved in acute deterioration, along with medicines required for emergency life support (Standard 8) is also featured. Medication safety underpins all that we do.

A close relationship between the Medication Safety Lead and the Safety and Quality Unit supports integration of the Standards throughout the health care setting, supporting optimal and safer patient care.

When I transferred to Fiona Stanley Hospital to be part of the hospital's commissioning team, it was important to work closely with the Safety and Quality Unit to develop strong foundations and relationships setting up the hospital for optimal patient safety management.

I have always found working with the Safety and Quality Unit rewarding. From a pharmacist perspective, collaboration provided a growth opportunity to extend my patient safety knowledge. It gave me a lens on clinical governance and how hospital executive management functioned. This led to future pathways of communication and quality improvement opportunities. As for most things, the value was two-way, creating a better understanding of medication safety needs and requirements from a pharmacist perspective, along with insight to guide best practice and problem solving.

Medication Safety works best with strong partnerships with the Safety and Quality Team. There is strength in team collaborations, such as within the Pharmacy Department, with other health professionals on the wards, and with the Safety and Quality Team to support optimal patient care.

Manager, Patient Safety and Quality: "The opportunity to work closely with the Medication Safety Pharmacist as part of our safety and quality team to ensure we met all the elements of the Medication Safety National Standard, in preparation for commissioning a new hospital, ongoing business as usual, and seeing this through to accreditation provided a well-rounded aspect to the preparation.

The momentum that could be used to ensure clinical staff understood the aspects as appropriate to their area of expertise was amazing. It also provided a wonderful opportunity for the safety and quality team to understand the 'pharmacy specialty' side of the standard and learn the practicalities of their everyday work. It was an experience I still look on fondly and feel it helped me to develop a much deeper understanding of the medication safety standard than I otherwise would have".

References

1. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC). *National Safety and Quality Health Services Standards*. Sydney: ACSQHC; 2021. Available from <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/national-safety-and-quality-health-service-standards-second-edition>.