

Navigating Choppy Waters - Implementation of a Dispensary Navigator

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Background

Recruitment and retention of pharmacists in regional hospitals is challenging. Resultant shortages of experienced staff can lead to a dependence on senior managers being rostered in operational positions, limiting their capacity for high level and strategic tasks. In the dispensary of our acute regional hospital, this resulted in excessive reliance on the Dispensary Manager and significant difficulties for the dispensary when the Dispensary Manager was rostered to non-operational tasks.

“I have been able to develop my skills in leadership, communication and prioritisation. Not only allowing me to learn more about being a pharmacist in a leadership role, but also more about my colleague's roles and how best to utilise all of my teammate's skills to create an efficient and positive environment for everyone. The dispensary navigator role has helped boost my confidence to apply for team leader roles and think more about my options within the dispensary and hospital for my ongoing career.” *Jardene Ralph BPharm*

Objective and Action

A dispensary role, titled the Dispensary Navigator, was developed which empowered the dispensary pharmacist to support the dispensary team whilst enabling the Dispensary Manager to undertake other tasks and no longer be the first point of call for the team.

The core responsibility of the Navigator is to oversee completion of daily and weekly tasks using printed checklists and white board notes. These tasks are shared amongst the team with the Navigator monitoring completion.

The Dispensary Navigator is also the first point of contact for pharmacist related dispensary queries.

The Navigator does not perform or take on responsibilities outside of the LI-2 Statement of Duties (SoD).

“The Navigator pharmacist role was a great initiative for both my professional growth and overall workflow for the dispensary. The regular fielding of questions relating to various aspects of dispensary pharmacy helped me to test my own knowledge and capabilities, as well as help hone my people skills in an often time pressured environment.”
Caleb Aitchison BPharm

Dispensary Navigator (examples)

Daily dispensary work flow and prioritisation

First point of reference for triaging and queries for team and hospital

Ensure completion of allocated tasks

Escalation of necessary dispensary matters to management

Dispensary Manager (examples)

Staff conflict and performance management

Safety event management and follow up

Orientation of new staff

Unresolved narcotic discrepancies

“During my time as dispensary navigator I was able to develop my leadership skills including delegation, conflict resolution and strategic thinking. The skills I developed in this role were crucial in helping me to gain a level 3 position as well as using in my application to progress to level 2.” *Nadia Dunning BPharm*

Evaluation

The first pharmacist rostered in the Dispensary Navigator position occurred in October 2021. Two rotational pharmacists were rostered to the dispensary on a twelve-week rotation, each working a 6-week block as the Navigator.

Ten pharmacists have now spent time in the Navigator role. Of those, two staff have gained employment at a tertiary referral hospital and three have since advanced to senior or specialised positions. Feedback from those recruitments has been that these staff were able to utilise aspects of their experience gained whilst in the Navigator role to demonstrate and provide examples of leadership skill and growth.

Feedback from staff in the Navigator role and other dispensary staff has been positive, noting that pharmacists rotating through the role are demonstrating improved confidence in problem solving, overseeing dispensary operations, managing under pressure and development of leadership skills. This has allowed the Dispensary Manager to focus on other important tasks that require their expertise.

Discussion

The Navigator role has been a successful addition to a regional hospital both for the workplace and the pharmacists. This role is being implemented at a second regional hospital.