

# PHARM-ASSIST

## Trialling a Novel Role for Pharmacists During the COVID-19 Nursing Crisis



ST JOHN OF GOD  
Subiaco Hospital

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### Challenge

Nursing workforce shortages have arisen as a consequence of COVID-19 due to:

- sickness,
- burnout,
- retention and recruitment issues.

### Initiative

A novel clinical support pharmacist (CSP) role was proposed to assist hospital nurses with medication related tasks, to direct more nursing time to patient care.

This was trialled for 2 weeks at St John of God Subiaco Hospital on the oncology (medical) ward and orthopaedic (surgical) ward.

### Clinical Support Pharmacist (CSP) Duties

- **Completion of medication history** – timely completion of best possible medication history
- **Double check medications with nurse** – including high risk APINCHS medications and Schedule 8/Schedule 4 Restricted
- **Order newly commenced and discharge medications**
- **Discharge reconciliation** – ensuring sufficient supply returned to patient with appropriate counselling
- (NO pharmaceutical review)



### Results

An audit sheet was used by the CSP to tally the number of each task performed.

As our baseline, the length of each CSP task was measured in minutes prior to the audit commencing.

Average total nursing time per day redirected to patient care



3.5 hours  
SURGICAL WARD



2.2 hours  
MEDICAL WARD

HAS THE CSP SERVICE SAVED YOU TIME?

100%

SURGICAL

100%

MEDICAL

■ YES ■ NO ■ UNANSWERED

DO YOU THINK THIS NEW CSP SERVICE WILL ASSIST IF WE HAVE AN ACUTE NURSING SHORTAGE IN THE FUTURE?

100%

SURGICAL

94%

MEDICAL

The clinical support pharmacist role was well received and highly valued by nursing staff of both wards.

In case of nursing caregiver shortage in the future, the potential for most efficient time savings in essential nursing care would be achieved via a CSP on a surgical ward rather than a medical ward.

On a medical ward the CSP position was valued equally for clinical intervention and education activities (additional to the planned role)

A sample of what surgical and medical nurses had to say:

*'Saved time with discharge, allowed for quicker turnaround'*

*'100% this experiment needs to continue'*

*'I felt very supported and that the ward is much safer with this pharmacy support'*

*'Improved workflow boosted team morale and decreased stress'*

*'Distribution of medications was quicker and more accurate'*

*'Keep her [sic CSP] on the ward permanently!'*

*'Get them [sic CSPs] back to help!'*

*'Please continue this as it really helps us provide quality and patient centred care'*

*'They facilitated safe medication practice, checking my IV meds and clarified using the pharmacy guide'*

*'Have it as a constant!'*

*'Saved me time in so many areas!'*

*'Picked up on new meds being charted that I wasn't made aware of. Allowing the patients to receive them faster'*

### Discussion

This trial demonstrates that pharmacists supporting nurses with medication related tasks redirects nursing time and promotes safe medication practice.

Senior pharmacists were used in this trial, however there is potential for early career pharmacists with appropriate credentialing to perform CSP roles, particularly in the surgical space.

#### Ongoing Roles - Subiaco

Due to maternity staff shortages at St John of God Subiaco Hospital, a CSP now assists midwives with medications on discharge.

- Primary role focuses on identifying which patients are discharging, dispensing required medication, delivery to the ward and providing appropriate counselling with provision of a medication list.

There are plans for a clinical support pharmacist role in the oncology area to commence in 2023, with additional role of being the second check for administration of chemotherapy.

#### Ongoing Roles - Midland

3 newly created Clinical Support Pharmacist positions have been in place since May 2022 at St John of God Midland Public and Private Hospital.

- CSPs have assisted through a difficult time of staff shortages due to COVID furloughing.
- Main duties include delivery of medications as well as Schedule 8/Schedule 4 Restricted returns and destructions.
- This has freed up Clinical Pharmacists to allow more time for pharmaceutical review on mental health, maternity and paediatric wards.