

Evaluating Clinical Pharmacy Services in an Ambulatory Psychiatry Setting

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One out of five adults in the United States have a mental illness. Moreover, mental illness is linked with increased morbidity, mortality, disability, and healthcare costs. This may be due, in part, to both undertreated and untreated psychiatric disorders. Furthermore, treatment nonadherence contributes greatly to poorer outcomes. Challenges to meeting the needs of patients with mental illness are further exacerbated by a shortage of mental health providers that is projected to last through the coming decade. Psychiatric pharmacists are uniquely trained in the use of psychotropic medications and have great potential to optimize patient care in the outpatient setting. Studies have demonstrated pharmacists can significantly improve patient adherence to therapy, patient satisfaction, patient knowledge regarding pharmacotherapy, and overall produce cost savings. There is limited data evaluating the value-added services provided by clinical pharmacists as part of the multidisciplinary team in outpatient psychiatry clinic. The results of this study can help validate and better define the potential impact of pharmacists in the psychiatric outpatient setting.

We completed a retrospective, single-center chart review from July 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020 evaluating the impact of pharmacist-led interventions on patient outcomes for mental health disorders. We found that 48% of medication-related interventions for depression had symptomatic improvement and 53% of medication-related interventions for anxiety disorder had symptomatic improvement. Pharmacist-led interventions improved medication reassurance and reduced incidence of adverse effects from psychotropic medications.

Although the results of this study were not validated with measurement-based outcomes, pharmacists in the outpatient psychiatry clinic improved management of symptoms and adverse effects for patients on psychiatric medications. Our findings emphasized the important role of pharmacists in providing direct patient care in regular pharmacy practice to improve adherence to medications and other patient-reported outcomes.