

Impact of clinical pharmacists on the work environment in ambulatory care clinics

Purpose: Clinical pharmacists have been identified as valuable team members in primary care clinics. Several studies have reported on the perceptions of clinical pharmacy services and the role of clinical pharmacists in primary care clinics. However, there are limited studies evaluating the impact of clinical pharmacists on healthcare providers' work environment. The purpose of this study is to determine healthcare providers' perceptions about the impact embedded clinical pharmacists have on their work environment in both primary care and specialty clinics.

Methods: This is a prospective, mixed methods study consisting of semi-structured interviews and a subsequent survey of healthcare providers in ambulatory care clinics. Healthcare providers including physicians, resident physicians, and advanced practice providers practicing at a primary care or specialty clinic with an embedded clinical pharmacist were included. Coded interview transcripts were analyzed for themes in order to develop the survey. The survey was distributed to all healthcare providers at the primary site, as well as healthcare providers with embedded clinical pharmacists at additional sites within the national healthcare organization. Survey responses will be analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics. Subgroup analyses will be conducted if a large enough sample size is obtained. Subgroup analyses may include frequency of pharmacy services utilization, provider type, and clinical practice area. Appropriate statistical tests will be selected based on the type of variable and number of groups being compared.

Results: Fourteen healthcare providers participated in the semi-structured interviews. Participants reported that clinical pharmacists had a positive impact on the work environment, workload, work-related stress, burnout and job recruitment or retention. The most common themes that contributed to the positive impact were sharing patient care responsibilities, being a knowledge resource and saving the provider time by answering questions. The main barrier to collaborating with a clinical pharmacist was his/her availability to both the provider and their patients. The most utilized pharmacy service was chronic disease management, mainly diabetes education and management. Clinical services identified that pharmacy may be able to improve provider satisfaction and patient included managing other chronic disease states and group patient education services. The survey is currently still open for responses.

Conclusions: Embedded clinical pharmacists have a positive impact on the work environment in ambulatory care clinics. The impact is seen by reducing workload, stress and the level of burnout amongst the healthcare providers through sharing patient care responsibilities and being a trusted resource.