



Pharmacy Technicians: Taking an Active Role in Medication Therapy Management

By: Melissa Ernzen, Pharm.D. CDE

Did you know that, according to the CDC, **82 percent** of American adults take at least one medication and **29 percent** take five or more medications?

An estimated 700,000 emergency department visits and 120,000 hospitalizations are due to adverse drug events annually, resulting in an annual cost of \$3.5 billion dollars. Additionally, a projected 40 percent of costs of ambulatory adverse drug events is estimated to be preventable.²

All of these factors have led to an increased demand for participation in medication therapy management (MTM).

MTM describes a broad range of healthcare services provided by a pharmacist as part of the larger healthcare team, with the goals of optimizing drug therapy and improving outcomes for patients, with the optimal outcome being the absence of a drug-related problem.¹ As part of the care team, pharmacy technicians can play a vital role in MTM.

An estimated

700,000

emergency department visits

AND

120,000

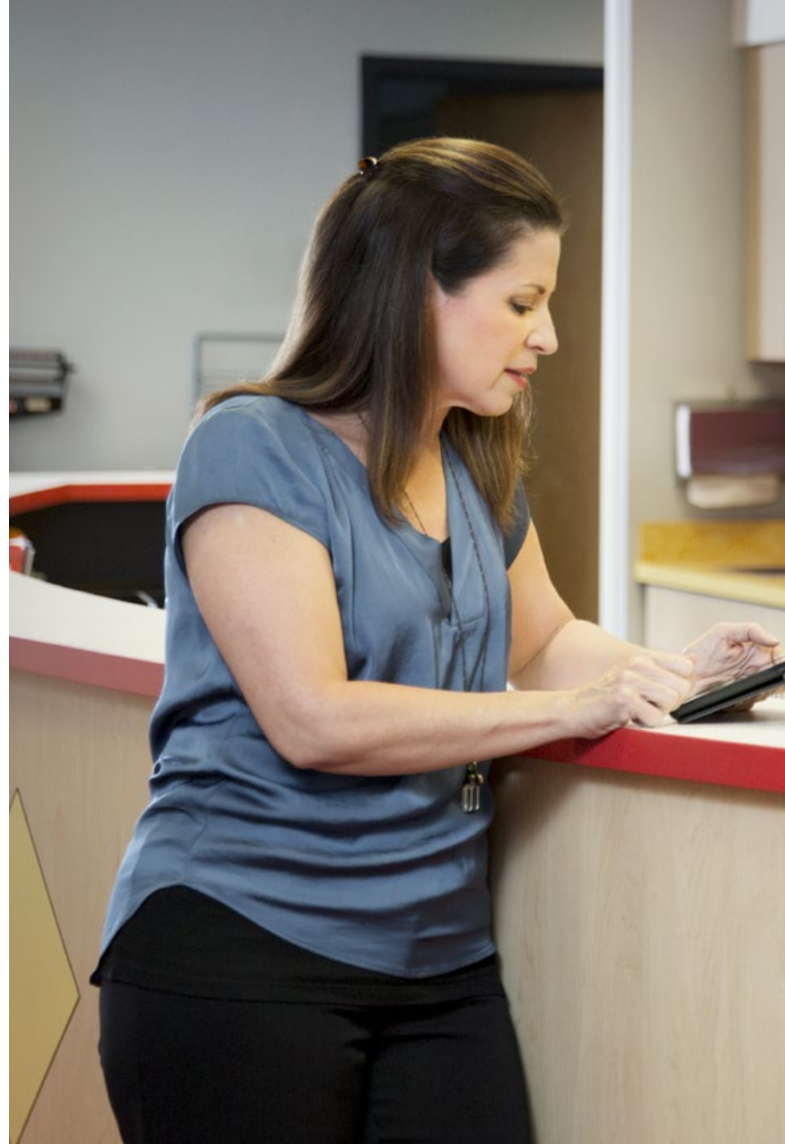
hospitalizations are due to adverse drug events annually

Although a pharmacist must perform some of the vital steps in MTM systems, pharmacy technician involvement is imperative.

The technician can be incredibly useful in identifying patients with MTM opportunities.

In the majority of pharmacy's MTM programs, technicians are used to monitor third-party MTM databases. Technicians also monitor a patient's adherence to their medication regimen, and alert the pharmacist if the patient is late on getting their medication refilled. These patients are flagged in the computer system so the technicians and pharmacists working in the pharmacy can easily identify the patient when they visit the pharmacy. Since face-to-face interaction is preferred, this is the easiest way to access patients. If a more involved interaction is required, the technician will contact the patient to set up an appointment at a convenient time when a pharmacist is available to provide MTM. In order to increase patient participation in the MTM program, the technician will send a reminder to the patient about the appointment and place a reminder call the day before the appointment if necessary.

The next area the technician can play a role is in creating the patient chart.



The technician would update the patient's medication list by discontinuing any medications that have been finished, such as antibiotics. They would then print an updated medication list and any forms that are required for completion by the third-party MTM program. This chart is then available to the pharmacist prior to the patient's appointment so it can be reviewed.

After the pharmacist provides MTM to the patient, documenting the care delivered and communicating information to the patient's other primary care providers is essential. This is where the technician can also be useful.

Many third-party MTM programs allow technicians to input the information the pharmacist provides from the interaction with the patient.



“Pharmacist care team members may especially contribute to the care of chronic illness by optimizing drug regimens to reduce adverse effects and increase efficacy.”³

A communication form may also need to be sent to the patient’s prescriber if a medication change is recommended. The technician can be responsible for sending this information to the prescriber and documenting any response.

The last area the technician can play a role in is patient billing. Some third-party payers have online billing procedures and others require paper billing. An example of such a system is Mercy Family Pharmacy that utilizes a super bill form that the pharmacist completes and then the technician can use to fill out the appropriate billing for that patient’s payer. The technician can also be responsible for making sure payment is received.

MTM therapy is critical in providing optimal medication outcomes for our patients, especially those with chronic disease. MTM service is also getting increasing support from third-party payers due to their demand for better patient care in order to receive full payment for services and medications. It would not be possible for pharmacists to provide this service efficiently without the participation and help of pharmacy technicians.

REFERENCES

- 1 Bluml, Benjamin M, Definition of Medication Therapy Management: Development of Professionwide Consensus, *Journal of the American Pharmacist Association*, September/October 2005;45:5, 566-572.
- 2 [CDC.gov/medicationsafety/basics.html](https://www.cdc.gov/medicationsafety/basics.html)
- 3 Wagner, Edward H, The Role of Patient Care Teams in Chronic Disease Management, *BMJ*, February 2000;320, 569.