

Developing and maintaining up-to-date training for pharmacy technicians

Q: I am currently the education coordinator in a health-system pharmacy in a 400-bed metropolitan teaching hospital. Our patient population requires highly skilled pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. At present there are no formalized pharmacy technician-training programs in our geographic area. I have just hired five new pharmacy technicians who will ultimately be responsible for duties throughout the department (i.e., inpatient and outpatient pharmacy, sterile intravenous medication preparation, and supply management). The members of our pharmacy team are responsible for ensuring that all measures, from the initial receipt of the medication order to the delivery of the drug, are handled with the utmost safety. What kind of tool is available to train our new pharmacy technicians to ensure that they have the skills to function as a member of our pharmacy?

A: Your question is a timely one. The second edition of the *Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Training* has just been completed.¹ You can obtain a copy from the ASHP Web site (www.ashp.org) under the technician practice resource area free of charge. This manual was developed as a nationwide project to provide technician educators with a prototype for training technicians in all practice settings and geographic locations. Specifically, it provides a guide for structuring the curriculum of a technician-training program, a checklist of quality components of existing training programs, suggestions for strengthening technicians' skills in specific areas, a list of job responsibilities and tasks that technicians can assume to allow pharmacists time to provide direct pa-

tient care, and a descriptive list of tasks to assist technicians when writing job descriptions.

In 1996 the first edition of the *Model Curriculum* was produced by a design team consisting of pharmacy technician educators and an instructional designer. The team used task analysis to identify the major job responsibilities of pharmacy technicians in all practice settings. The group considered findings from the Scope of Pharmacy Practice Project supplemented by direct observations of pharmacy technicians and interviews of technician educators. Realizing that at that time the entire practice of pharmacy and, consequently, the role of technicians were in transition, the team included projections of job responsibilities for technicians for at least five years into the future. The team then inter-

preted the outcome of their task analysis to determine the knowledge, skills, and attitudes technicians would require to fulfill each job responsibility. This yielded instructional objectives that served as guides to teaching technicians to perform any given task. The objectives and instructional objectives were then organized into modules for instruction. As a last step, the team sequenced the modules to account for learning prerequisites. The 2001 revision of the curriculum reflects reexamination of potential job responsibilities, associated tasks, and the required instruction. It is current with pharmacy practice in 2001 and with expectations for the next five years.

When using the curriculum, keep in mind that it is a comprehensive document that includes all known potential job responsibilities that might be delegated by the pharmacist to the technician. Therefore, a user's guide is included with the curriculum to help you pare down the training menu to suit your needs. The curriculum consists of four components, including (1) goal statements, objectives, and instructional objectives, (2) a curriculum map with suggested sequencing of the modules of instruction, (3) descriptors for each of the instruction modules, and (4) a tracking document that identifies where each objective and instructional objective are taught.

Goal statements describe job responsibilities that may be delegated by the pharmacist to the technician (appendix). Goal statements also describe foundational knowledge and skills that underlie skilled performance of multiple tasks. This component of the curriculum is a virtual gold mine. Many pharmacy managers are seeking creative ways to use technicians to free the pharmacist's hands for direct patient care. Managers often report that they are not conversant with all the possible duties

The Questions & Answers column features ASHP staff responses to inquiries from pharmacists in health systems. Through this column, more practitioners can benefit from the answers prepared by the staff. The column may also include answers solicited from others, including government agencies such as OSHA, FDA, and DEA.

Pharmacists with questions for ASHP should write directly to the appropriate staff member, not AJHP. Frequently called extensions are listed in every issue of AJHP on the page after the Table of Contents.

of technicians. The curriculum's list of goal statements gives the big picture, and the objectives that fall beneath them clarify the exact tasks a technician would perform if assigned a particular job responsibility.

Want to write the technician's new job description with minimum muss, fuss, and bother while wording it with accurate task descriptions that are observable, measurable, behaviors that directly facilitate assessment of competence? Then use the curriculum's task statements verbatim. Of course, if you are designing training for your technicians, the curriculum is first and foremost provided to meet your needs. Technicians who want to determine the quality of a continuing-education offering can use the list of instructional objectives under a given task to determine if the training offered is sufficient to enable them to perform the task in question.

The modules of instruction will be extremely useful in your design of a training program once you have decided what job responsibilities you will delegate to the technician. Content that is best taught and learned as a unit has been placed into a module consisting of all the objectives and instructional objectives that form the unit of instruction. There are 37 of these modules, including 4 that are actual practice experiences—each in a different type of practice setting.

The modules have been arranged on a curriculum map that shows the order in which the modules should be taught so that all learning prerequisites are accounted for before tackling a new area of learning. For example, math skills are taught before attempting to teach how to compound a product.

Unless you operate a technician-training program intended to serve all practice environments and all geographic areas of the country, you will undoubtedly want to select goals that meet your individual needs. You may be responsible for the initial training of newly hired technicians to perform designated tasks, or you may have technicians on staff whom you want to assume new job responsibilities. The last component of the curriculum, called the tracking document, provides enormous help in addressing these issues. Once you know the goals you need to teach, you can use the tracking document to identify the modules to which each has been assigned. Then, with the pertinent modules in front of you, you can turn to the curriculum map, which will help you find the prerequisite learning that you should consider.

The *Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Training* is a multiple-use document that we believe will serve the full spectrum of your technician-training needs.

1. Model curriculum for pharmacy technician training, 2nd ed. Bethesda, MD: American Society of Health-System Pharmacists; 2001.

Lisa Lifshin, Pharm.D.

Manager, Program Services and Coordinator, Technician Program Development
Accreditation Services Division

Christine Nimmo, Ph.D.

Director, Educational Resources
Educational Services Division



The Global Marketplace for Pharmaceuticals



providing savings and efficiency...
In a 5 minute order process.

" Register Now "

Savings

GlobeXPharma.com sources biologicals from multiple vendors daily

GXP provides pharmacy buyers with updated, competitive pricing

Efficiency

GlobeXPharma.com provides a full range of biologicals from multiple vendors.

• Source Products Faster •

• Eliminates time-consuming phone calls and faxes •

Visit us at ASHP year-end meeting
Los Angeles June 3-6, 2001

Service debuts early June, 2001
at www.GlobeXPharma.com

1-800-360-0650

Continued from page 969

Appendix—Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Training, Second Edition

Major areas of job responsibility

- Goal 1:** Assist the pharmacist in collecting, organizing, and evaluating information for direct patient care, medication use review, and departmental management.
- Goal 2:** Receive and screen prescription/medication orders for completeness and authenticity.
- Goal 3:** Prepare medications for distribution.
- Goal 4:** Verify the measurements, preparation, and/or packaging of medications produced by other technicians.
- Goal 5:** Distribute medications.
- Goal 6:** Assist the pharmacist in the administration of immunizations.
- Goal 7:** Assist the pharmacist in the identification of patients who desire/require counseling to optimize the use of medications, equipment, and devices.
- Goal 8:** Initiate, verify, assist in the adjudication of, and collect payment and/or initiate billing for pharmacy services and goods.
- Goal 9:** Purchase pharmaceuticals, devices, and supplies according to an established purchasing program.
- Goal 10:** Control the inventory of medications, equipment, and devices according to an established plan.
- Goal 11:** Assist the pharmacist in monitoring the practice site and/or service area for compliance with federal, state, and local laws; regulations; and professional standards.
- Goal 12:** Maintain pharmacy equipment and facilities.
- Goal 13:** Assist the pharmacist in preparing, storing, and distributing investigational medication products.
- Goal 14:** Assist the pharmacist in the monitoring of medication therapy.
- Goal 15:** Participate in the pharmacy department's process for preventing medication misadventures.

Foundation knowledge and skills

- Goal 16:** Take personal responsibility for assisting the pharmacist in improving direct patient care.
- Goal 17:** Demonstrate ethical conduct in all job-related activities.
- Goal 18:** Maintain an image appropriate for the profession of pharmacy.
- Goal 19:** Resolve conflicts through negotiation.
- Goal 20:** Understand the principles for managing change.
- Goal 21:** Appreciate the need to adapt direct patient care to meet the needs of diversity.
- Goal 22:** Appreciate the benefits of active involvement in local, state, and national technician and other pharmacy organizations.
- Goal 23:** Appreciate the value of obtaining technician certification.
- Goal 24:** Understand the importance of and resources for staying current with changes in pharmacy practice.
- Goal 25:** Communicate clearly when speaking or writing.
- Goal 26:** Maximize work efficiency through the use of technology.
- Goal 27:** Efficiently solve problems commonly encountered in one's own work.
- Goal 28:** Display a caring attitude toward patients in all aspects of job responsibilities.
- Goal 29:** Maintain confidentiality of patient and proprietary business information.
- Goal 30:** Understand direct patient care delivery systems in multiple practice settings.
- Goal 31:** Efficiently manage one's work whether performed alone or as part of a team.
- Goal 32:** Function effectively as a member of the health care team.
- Goal 33:** Balance obligations to one's self, relationships, and work in a way that minimizes stress.
- Goal 34:** Understand the use and side effects of prescription and nonprescription medications used to treat common disease states.
- Goal 35:** Assist the pharmacist in assuring the quality of all pharmaceutical services.

**FILL a position.
FIND a position.
FILL a fellowship.
FIND a fellow.**

AJHP Classified Advertising:

***It Works
for You!***

For rate information, contact:
Pam Pearce
180 Old Tappan Road
(201) 767-4170 ext 25
(201) 767-2784 (fax)
ppearce@cunnasso.com