

MEMBER'S SPOTLIGHT



Trinh Le, M.S.

Information Systems Manager

Member Since: October 1996

Focus: Pharmacy Automation

Her Story

Trinh Le earned her Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. She then went on to earn her Master of Science in Hospital Pharmacy from the University of Kansas, Kansas City, KS, where she also completed a two-year Pharmacy Practice Residency in Administration. Trinh is currently the Information Systems Manager at Children's National Medical Center where she is responsible for direct patient care activities and coordinates the hospital and department of pharmacy's information management plan. In this role, she is the liaison for the Pharmacy and IT department, project manager for new pharmacy order entry system, liaison for computerized provider order entry system, PYXIS@2000 profile and biometric implementation and she also serves as a preceptor to pharmacy practice residents and pharmacy students. Additionally, Trinh directly manages four pharmacy staff and implements several operational projects such as streamlining the Therapeutic Drug Monitoring Program and Pyxis Profile.

Overview of the Facility

Children's National Medical Center, located in Washington, DC, is a nationally recognized leader in Pediatric Medicine with research facilities, satellite offices and primary care centers. Children's is a 279 bed acute care medical hospital with a Level 1 trauma center, a Level 4 NICU, and operates seven outpatient centers in the DC metro area. The medical center has 3,356 FTE's, of which 53(FTE's) are in the pharmacy department; 20 are Pharmacy Technicians, 3 Residents, 25 Pharmacists and 5 Managers and Pharmacy Specialists.

Currently, Children's has 38 dispensing Pyxis machines, in house, and some in the outpatient centers. They also have a CII-Safe, TPN system, and ABACUS system where TPN is entered and goes directly to the pharmacist to be verified, with no paper trail. Children's also compounds TPN for another local hospital.

Automation-Increasing the Quality of Patient Care

Children's is converting their existing pharmacy system to a new pharmacy system to be compatible with the new Computerized Physician Order Entry (CPOE) system. The conversion to CPOE is scheduled to be live in December (phase 1). This entirely new system, currently being built by two pharmacists and a technician, will eliminate the actual entering of prescription orders and allow all orders come to the pharmacy electronically. The pharmacist still interprets the order (checks doses), but it eliminates the need for interpretation of the prescription. This will minimize the potential for medical errors and adverse drug events thus improving quality of care. In addition to implementing CPOE, Children's is also moving towards Bar Coding (currently in phase 2). All of these automation enhancements will improve how medication is delivered, while diminishing errors, which is so crucial in pediatric care.

Automation Challenges

The biggest challenge for Children's is transitioning from a paper system to a CPOE system, because there are processes and procedures that can not be communicated into a system. Another challenge is that a great deal of CPOE sites are for adults and having things more pediatric friendly would make things easier. "Instead we have to customize the system in order for pediatric dosing to correctly display for the end user," said Le. Moreover, all the system enhancements are happening at once and it's hard to manage that much change and gain the support of pharmacists, which is important for a smooth transition.

The Rewards

Educating staff about the importance of pharmacy automation is rewarding for Trinh. She states "there are a lot of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who do not know about the pharmacy piece in technology." Most pharmacists are afraid of trying new things in terms of

technology. And it is Trinh's role to inform pharmacists how utilization of information technology applications can improve quality of care.

Next Steps

The technology field is growing in terms of available technology and the need for people highly trained in automation and information technology. The downside is that there are less people getting involved in this field and so there is a small pool of qualified candidates with CPOE experience. Also, there is a lot of conversation on CPOE and how information technology should have more exposure in the classroom at the college level. Trinh would increase awareness of the expanded role of the pharmacist in the automation field by participation in national and local conferences and serving as a preceptor for pharmacy students and residents.

Professionally, Trinh's position has allowed her to take on new projects and learn more about the automation side of pharmacy, while also allowing her to pursue other interests. She understands and values the importance of a residency program in career development and this is why she will shortly be in charge of the three residents that will come through Children's.

Advice

Trinh has found that networking is extremely important, especially in a career as a pharmacy manager. "It is also important to understand other perspectives, network through listserves or meetings and to more importantly bring this information back to share with my colleagues at Children's," said Le.

"Don't be afraid to try something new," is Trinh's advice. She did not think she would be in the automation field, but when she had an opportunity to get into information systems management (through networking) she gladly stepped in and has learned about the automation side of pharmacy.

The Value of ASHP Membership

"Membership in ASHP provides me with an avenue for networking and opportunities for professional growth. Taking on a leadership position in the society provides an outlet to help further the profession and to also keep abreast of what's happening' in the profession," said Le.

Trinh was first introduced to ASHP as a student and has had mentors throughout her career who are advocates of the Society. She loves that there are many ways to get involved in ASHP. When Trinh was on the programming committee, she had a chance to coordinate a session for Midyear on Automation Technology. "It was a wonderful opportunity because I had a chance to coordinate the event and network with the presenters," said Le.

For more information contact Trinh Le at t1e@cnmc.org.