

Pharmacists Reduce Heart Failure Hospitalization Rates

Patients with heart failure who received a pharmacist's care had nearly one-third lower hospitalization rates for heart failure and for all causes, according to an April 14, 2008 review article in the Archives of Internal Medicine.

The review of 12 randomized controlled trials (2,060 patients) compared the outcomes for patients with heart failure who received a pharmacist's care with patients who did not receive a pharmacist's care. Pharmacists providing care either initiated and managed the intervention or worked as part of a collaborative health care team. In these trials, pharmacists educated patients about heart failure and evidence-based heart failure medications, which included self-monitoring, medication management, and facilitating compliance.

Between the two types of pharmacist interventions studied, there was not a significant difference in the effect on all-cause hospitalizations. However, pharmacist care as part of a collaborative health care team resulted in a greater reduction of heart failure hospitalizations than pharmacist-directed interventions.

As a result of these findings, the review article's authors recommend adding pharmacists to collaborative health care teams that treat patients with heart failure. Doing so could reduce the more than 1 million annual heart failure hospitalizations in the United States by 30%, according to the authors.

The complete research results are available at <http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/168/7/687>.

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ASHP Health Policy Alerts are synopses of new studies highlighting the medication-use process in health care, especially studies assessing contemporary pharmacists' role in improving medication-use outcomes. The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists encourages recipients to keep a copy of this synopsis for future reference.

