

Member Spotlight



Deb Saine, MS, RPh

*Medication Safety Coordinator
Winchester Medical Center
Member Since: November 1979
Focus: Medication Safety*

Her Story

Deb Saine received her B.S. in Pharmacy, magna cum laude from the University of Toledo and her M.S. in Management from Antioch University in 2003. Deb has an extensive background in hospital pharmacy with experience as clinical staff pharmacist, clinical coordinator, medication safety manager, and director in hospitals ranging in size from 25 to 750 beds. Currently, Deb is the Medication Safety Coordinator at Winchester Medical Center, Winchester, VA. She chairs the Medication Safety Section Advisory Group, Section of Inpatient Care Practitioners, was the past Chair of the Section of Inpatient Care Practitioners, serves on the Council of Pharmacy Practice, and is the Virginia Delegate to the ASHP House of Delegates.

Practice Area

For over the past 16 years, Deb's primary practice focus has been Medication Safety. Her role is to continually identify and evaluate opportunities for reducing errors related to medication use, and to develop and implement safety strategies. She also tries to cultivate an environment friendly to medication safety, where staff feel comfortable sharing concerns and reporting potential and actual errors. "While expertise in pharmacy knowledge and operations are important, involvement in medication safety takes me to all areas of the hospital, wherever medications may be used. It is this continual learning and an opportunity to bring pharmacy perspective to new areas that keep me excited about my practice," Saine said.

Overview of the Facility

Deb works at a 411-bed, non-profit, regional referral hospital- Winchester Medical Center, which offers a broad spectrum of services. It is one of three hospitals in the Valley Health System, a nonprofit organization of health care providers serving residents of the northern Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, West Virginia and western Maryland. The pharmacy department employs about 60 people, with 21 FTE pharmacists who provide clinical, distributive, administrative and teaching services.

Unique Aspect of Pharmacy

As a medication safety pharmacist, she is involved in a variety of projects at any point in time- some with a finite goal, while others are ongoing quality improvement teams. Examples range from creating a system-wide poster for patient safety awareness week (which mentions medications, of course!) to working on meeting Joint Commission and regulatory standards. One work group developed a process

for high concentration insulin which included a mandatory pharmacist consult to verify the dose as well as dispensing of pharmacy prepared patient-specific doses; following successful implementation of this, the group moved on to work on patient self- management of continuous subcutaneous insulin infusion. At her hospital they are addressing considerations related to risk management, nursing, patient assessment, medication management, standard order sets, consent form, documentation, and more. This requires an understanding of how the pieces of the puzzle come together, and team dynamics to complete the puzzle efficiently.

Her organization is actively involved in various stages of implementation of bar code medication verification, electronic medication administration records, and computerized provider order entry. The advancement of technology brings with it a new set of medication safety concerns, as well as the pre-existing ones. Each of these systems and related processes requires a thorough assessment for medication safety. The medication safety pharmacist is often in a unique position to have an overall understanding of the connection between prescribing, dispensing, administration, procurement, and monitoring processes. As a member of technology teams, Deb helps to recognize risk points for error as well as identify best practices, technology gaps, and potential solutions. They are also evaluating “smart pumps” for analgesia – this involves direct interaction with nursing and anesthesia providers. As a pharmacist, she can offer assistance with medication choice (bag/syringe/in-house preparation vs. outsource), evaluation of pump safety features, and assessment of pump library options. Improving medication management related to chemotherapy, anticoagulation, contrast media, and medication use in the emergency room are in the early stages of future projects.

The Rewards

Deb believes that the opportunity to participate in teaching and mentoring students, residents, and peers is very rewarding. Including Medication Safety into required and elective School of Pharmacy classes has also been a new endeavor for her. "It is remarkable to see the creativity of students as they deepen their understanding of safety concepts and develop error prevention strategies," said Saine. Medication Safety is integrated into their residency program, and requires completion of at least one project related to safety. The educational efforts around safety can be seen as a domino effect is apparent as residents teach students. "Another rewarding aspect of my practice is that every single day is different! I interact with a wide variety of individuals throughout the organization, and have gained an appreciation for others' professional perspectives and patient care issues. This allows me to view the “big picture” of medication safety, has given me the chance to identify (or know when to question) the impact of change on different aspects of the medication management process. Lastly, knowing I make a difference in the care of the patient through my involvement in medication safety is a primary motivation!"

Advice

"I encourage pharmacists interested in Medication Safety to hone their curiosity – ask questions, look beyond the scope of the traditional pharmacy walls, and become involved with multidisciplinary teams. If possible, contact a medication safety pharmacist in your area and arrange to meet with or shadow him/her for a period of time. A diversity of experience is an asset for a medication safety pharmacist - completion of a residency is helpful. Postgraduate programs in medication safety are available such as ASHP accredited medication-use safety residencies, and fellowship programs in medication safety (e.g. ISMP, Cardinal Health). Build relationships with leaders (both formal and informal) of departments of pharmacy, risk management, nursing, medical staff and others. I encourage pharmacists to view themselves as champions of medication safety. Pharmacy has a clear leadership role to fulfill in this area – I call on all pharmacists, regardless of title or position, to model safe medication management and take the initiative to lead in safety efforts," Saine said.

Value of ASHP Membership

"There are no two ways about it - involvement with ASHP has been a defining component of my career path. Participation at the local and state levels contributed to leadership development. Midyear and Summer Meeting attendance enhanced communication and presentation skills. Membership in ASHP allowed me to partake in continuous learning, with opportunities to expand perspectives. It's one way I stay current with national trends and scope of practice. Over time, I've developed friendships and professional relationships with pharmacists all over the country. It would not be an understatement to call ASHP a "lifeline" during my experience as a first-time director at a small and rural community hospital. The wealth of information sharing and support offered by colleagues all over the country was phenomenal. Using ASHP listservers provides continuous education on contemporary topics and a resource base for problem solving. There is a sense of accomplishment in giving back to the profession. I have been fortunate to serve ASHP in various capacities: Section of Inpatient Care Practitioners Executive Committee, Section Advisory Group, Council, House of Delegates, assisting with programming, reviewing guidelines, and more. Each experience has afforded personal and professional growth – as well as having fun!" Saine explained.