ADVOCACY ISSUE BRIEF

Psychiatric Pharmacists Add Value To The Interprofessional Patient Care Team

Psychiatric Pharmacists Increase Access to Specialized Integrated Health Care

SUBSTANTIAL NEED FOR CARE

Mental illness affects nearly 1 in 4 (22.8%) Americans.[1]

PATIENT CENTERED CARE

Comprehensive health care services provided by a team that includes a psychiatric pharmacist improves patient and health system outcomes.[2,3,4]

ACCESS TO CARE

Given the current and projected shortage of mental health providers and growing need for specialized care, access to a team of care providers is more critical than ever.[5]

Psychiatric Pharmacists are highly trained, advanced practice clinical specialists who practice in various health care settings.[5,6] They improve patient and health system outcomes by providing Comprehensive Medication Management including:

- Assessing a patient's complete medication list—prescription, nonprescription, vitamins, and supplements—to ensure that they are appropriate, safe, effective and affordable
- Developing individualized care plans with therapy goals and personalized interventions
- Prescribing and ordering medication related laboratory tests
- Providing follow-up to evaluate response, adverse effects, progress toward treatment goals, and to adjust medications as needed
- Educating patients and families about medications and lifestyle modifications
- Referring to other providers and specialists for services such as diagnostic clarification, psychotherapy, and dietary counseling

OUTCOME: Increased Access to Care

Efficient and effective medication management increases availability of psychiatrists, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners, which results in decreased wait times for appointments

OUTCOME: Coordinated Care Transitions

Effective care transitions ensure continuity of pharmaceutical care and accurate and complete medication reconciliation between levels of care

OUTCOME: Integrated Psychiatric and Physical Health Care

By focusing on the whole patient and medication list, psychiatric pharmacists are uniquely positioned to improve communication between the mental health and medical care teams

OUTCOME: Improved Patient Outcomes and Experience

Increased consistency in taking medications, improved treatment response, patient satisfaction, and fewer primary care visits are all proven results when psychiatric pharmacists are members of the treatment team.

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Psychiatric Pharmacists Treat Substance Use Disorders

SAM comes to the emergency department (ED) for opioid withdrawal and requests medication-assisted treatment to prevent relapse. The ED team consults with the psychiatric pharmacist who sees Sam to discuss treatment options and explains the potential risks and benefits of methadone and buprenorphine/naloxone. Sam and the psychiatric pharmacist engage in shared decision making and determine buprenorphone/naloxone will be initiated. The ED team agrees with the plan. The psychiatric pharmacist educates on proper use of the sublingual formulation, required monitoring, expectations for effectiveness, and potential side effects. The psychiatric pharmacist provides Sam with a naloxone rescue kit and education on proper use in the event of an opioid overdose.



> "Having a psychiatric pharmacist brings consistent and methodical approaches to medication and treatment pathways."
>
> *Jeffrey Seal, MD, Medical Director and Psychiatrist, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services, New Mexico*

Psychiatric Pharmacists Apply Expertise in Mental Health Medications

ANNE is 7-months pregnant and living with bipolar disorder. Following the advice of her OBGYN, she stopped lithium in the first trimester. She comes to her primary care clinic with complaints of racing thoughts, irritability, and poor sleep. Her PCP asks the psychiatric pharmacist on the care team to meet with Anne for an assessment and provide an evidence-based recommendation. The psychiatric pharmacist determines Anne has previously benefitted from lithium therapy. She reviews potential risks and benefits of lithium in the 3rd trimester with Anne who agrees to resume lithium therapy. The psychiatric pharmacist discusses drug interactions and side effects with the patient and assists with care coordination including laboratory and safety monitoring to ensure optimal patient outcomes.



> "For many patients, having access to a psychiatric pharmacist means getting the appropriate care they have never had."
>
> *Stephanie McAndrew, MD, Family Medicine Hillsboro Primary Care Clinic, Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center, Oregon*

Psychiatric Pharmacists Optimize Medication Adherence

JESSE, an Army Veteran, is admitted to an inpatient psychiatry unit for schizophrenia after stopping oral antipsychotic medication. As a member of the interdisciplinary care team, the psychiatric pharmacist meets with Jesse to assess reasons for nonadherence to treatment. Jesse explains the nonadherence started with forgetting to take the medication, which then led to fully stopping treatment. The psychiatric pharmacist discusses the option of starting a long-acting injectable antipsychotic to target improved adherence, decreased pill burden, and decreased risk of rehospitalization. Jesse agrees and works with the psychiatric pharmacist and interdisciplinary team to choose the most appropriate long-acting injectable antipsychotic option. The psychiatric pharmacist determines dose, administration, and monitoring needs and assists with care coordination to ensure continuity of treatment post-discharge.



> "The psychiatric pharmacist serves a unique role in helping psychiatrists provide high quality care for veterans. As team members, they are highly valued for their input on patients who have adverse reactions or have failed multiple treatments. They are engaged in ensuring that patient safety is first and foremost."
>
> *Nicole Braida, MD, Psychiatrist Associate Chief of Staff, Mental Health, South Texas Veterans Affairs Health Care System, Texas*

The American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists (AAPP) is a professional association representing psychiatric pharmacists nationwide. Our members integrate into teams of health care professionals, making a difference in overall costs, treatment efficiencies, patient recovery, and quality of life.

References available at: https://aapp.org/advocacy/team

AAPP
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