

Transitions of Care: Central to Medication Safety Across the Healthcare System

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As a transitions of care pharmacist, ensuring that patients move through the healthcare system safely and effectively is foundational to my practice. As a mother, daughter, and patient who has found medical errors in the provision of my own care and that of my loved ones, medication safety is near and dear to my heart. While more pharmacists are working in dedicated transitions of care roles across different healthcare settings, I strongly believe it is the role of every pharmacist, pharmacy technician, and pharmacy intern to understand and implement interventions that will ensure medications are optimized through the continuum of care.

The term “transitions of care” describes the movement of a patient from one setting of care to another. This includes changes in healthcare

setting, provider, service, or level of care. Poor communication among healthcare providers, lack of standardized processes, and changes in patient acuity leave patients vulnerable to medication errors during transitions of care. As shown in multiple studies and reports, pharmacy interventions during care transitions can reduce readmissions and medication errors, improve health outcomes and patient satisfaction, and decrease inappropriate utilization of health services.

Pharmacy interventions—including medication reconciliation, patient education, assessing and addressing adherence barriers, and hand-off communications—can improve medication management during healthcare transitions. Collaboration and communication among the

members of the healthcare team and their patients are integral to this process. Without universal best practices to rely on, interventions should address the needs of the healthcare institution and the patient populations they serve.

This theme issue of *California Pharmacist* provides background on the role of pharmacy during transitions of care across different healthcare settings, describes best practices and innovations from a broad range of health settings in California, and discusses the importance of patient outcomes and quality improvement metrics to increase impact and value of pharmacy services. I am honored to have served as guest editor for this issue and hope you find it useful in developing optimal transitions of care in your practice. 🍀

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