What Does a Pharmacist Do?

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Poll Everywhere:

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Outline

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**Background**

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Background

**What is a time and motion study:** A time and motion study is a business efficiency technique or method employed to establish employee productivity standards.

These methods were established to INCREASE productivity by utilizing, gaging and measuring the following characteristics:

1. a complex task is broken down into small simple steps
2. the sequence of movement taken by the employee in performing those steps is carefully observed to detect and eliminate redundant or wasteful motions
3. precise time for each correct movement is measured

If employed correctly, these studies can help reduce and control costs, increase overall productivity, improve working conditions and motivate employees.
Have these studies been done in the pharmacy setting before? **YES**

Multiple time and motion studies performed in different pharmacy settings

The studies were done in an effort to add value to the pharmacist’s position by decreasing time spent performing tasks that could be performed by other staff or professionals.

Prescription preparation, clinician interaction, medical record evaluation, and writing labels for medications take up **~95% of a pharmacist’s day.**

To add to this, it is estimated that **40%** of time spent performing those duties are considered “non-value added” to the pharmacist’s time and expertise.
Background

Where do pharmacists work???

Pharmacists can work in retail, clinical, hospital, ambulatory care, long-term care, nuclear, pharmaceutical benefit manager, home infusion and chemotherapy, informatics, faculty, and many more.

Our focus for this study will be on the retail, clinical, hospital, ambulatory, and faculty.
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Objectives

Why are we doing this?

Gauge where inefficiencies are becoming problematic

Identify new standards to increase productivity and eliminate wasted time in a pharmacist's daily activities

• Where to start?

  • Observing how pharmacists are managing their daily tasks in different settings

*It should be noted that time and motion studies are only generally appropriate for repetitive tasks and thus methods may differ from occupation to occupation*
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Collect data every five minutes for a total of 18 hours from each setting
- Retail
- Clinical
- Ambulatory Care
- Hospital
- Faculty

Each student followed one pharmacist for 6 hours in each setting
- 18 hours per setting = 90 total hours for the study

Determined 20 general task categories

Reported summary statistics for each setting
- How much time pharmacists spend doing various tasks
- Make recommendations/suggestions as to which tasks could potentially be delegated to pharmacy technicians or other healthcare professionals
**Methods**

**Data Collection Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting (circle one): Retail</th>
<th>Clinical</th>
<th>Ambulatory Care</th>
<th>Hospital</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Pharmacy</strong> (if applicable):</td>
<td><strong>City, State:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pharmacist’s Position:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Length of Pharmacist’s Experience:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Time in:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Time Out:</strong></td>
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Results – Retail

Verifying: 48%
Counseling: 11%
Patient Education: 7%

These three total 66% time spent on pharmacist-specific tasks

Problem is the 18% time spent doing tasks that could be delegated to other pharmacy staff members
  • Including: calling doctors, ordering drugs, inventory counts, calling insurance companies, signing out

Miscellaneous: 12%
Results – Clinical

Largest amount of time:
- Verifying: 22%
- Charting: 18%
- Reporting/Questions: 15%

Most time spent on Pharmacist specific tasks
- Drug Information
- Rounding
- Patient education
- Counseling
- Chart Review
Results – Ambulatory Care

4 main tasks:
- Chart Review: 22%
- Charting: 20%
- Counseling: 20%
- Patient Education: 17%

Similar to a Clinical Pharmacist, they spent most of their time on Pharmacist specific tasks
- But more patient interaction tasks like counseling and patient education
Results – Hospital

Vast majority of their time is spent verifying – 68%

Other tasks depend on where the pharmacist is at in the hospital
  - Central Pharmacy
  - Satellite Pharmacy
Results – Faculty

Teaching takes most of their time – 26%

Widest variety of categories (14)

Specific teaching tasks – 40%
  • Grading: 4%
  • Planning/teaching prep: 10%
  • Teaching: 26%

Job related tasks
  • Depends on which area the faculty pharmacist works in outside of teaching related tasks (clinical versus retail)
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Results – Overall
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Across all settings of pharmacy observed, 30% of pharmacists time is spent verifying prescriptions
  ◦ Makes sense because pharmacists are the medication experts

Next largest portion of time spent is in patient education (9%)
  ◦ Pharmacists need to share their knowledge of medications with their patients to help them manage their medications

8.8% of time was spent charting each patient encounter
  ◦ Documents actions taken at each encounter
  ◦ Helps the healthcare team to avoid therapies that were tried in the past but failed
  ◦ Helps the healthcare team know what has worked in the past
Discussion

7.8% of time spent counseling patients
  ◦ Helps ensure their patients are using their medications correctly and getting the most out of their drug therapy

Limitations
  ◦ Every action a pharmacist makes is hard to record
    ◦ Might be better to have pharmacist speak into a recording device to further detail each action they are taking
  ◦ Pharmacy is a service industry and some of their actions are dictated by the patients
    ◦ Events can differ day to day
      ◦ Need a larger sample size
  ◦ Some activities left out
    ◦ Ex: calling insurance
  ◦ Results may be subject to the Hawthorne effect
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Conclusion

Pharmacists are an integral member of the healthcare team.

Learning how they use their time now can afford insights in how to use them more effectively.

Verifying prescriptions and charting each patient encounter take up the most of their time each day.
  ◦ Almost 40% of their day
    ◦ This activity adds value to the profession, but is there a way to perform these same activities but take less time so more time could be spent with patients?

Next area of focus needs to be on how to get the most out of the pharmacists time.
  ◦ New technology, more pharmacy technician responsibility, tech-check-tech

New technology or ideas in workflow could help add more value to the profession and ultimately help the pharmacist make a larger public health impact in their community.
References


Santiago AC. What Career Paths Are Available in Pharmacy & How Do I Chose the Right One? The Balance.


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Questions?

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