

“MORTAR & PENCIL” CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF PHARMACY STUDENT WRITING CLUB:

Business Member Spotlight: Aspirus Wausau Hospital Pharmacy

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Day to Day Practice

Aspirus Wausau Hospital (AWH) is a level two trauma hospital, with 325 beds and an average daily census of 160. It is the largest hospital in the Aspirus system and serves patients in fourteen counties across northern and central Wisconsin, including the western half of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. AWH provides primary, secondary, and tertiary care services. It is known for its cardiology program and has been recognized by Watson Health 50 Top Cardiovascular Hospitals (formally the Truven Health Analytics study) for the last eleven years.

The AWH campus includes three pharmacies: inpatient, outpatient and oncology/infusion. There are currently twenty-four inpatient pharmacists employed, most of whom are self-scheduled. Inpatient pharmacists are decentralized to seven different units, including Cardiology, Critical Care, Post-Surgical, Oncology, general medical (MAP), Day Surgery, and Infectious Disease, which are staffed with varying hours, Monday through Friday. The emergency room is staffed from 11:00 am to 9:30 pm, seven days per week, while the inpatient core pharmacy is 24/7. Pharmacists on the units are involved in ordering, verifying, and dispensing medications, in addition to providing consultations to patients. Dr. Jill Michaud, Director of Pharmacy, emphasizes “pharmacists are to be the everything for the department.” Activities include order verification after hours for Aspirus Medford Hospital (AMH), Aspirus Langlade Hospital (ALH) and NorthCentral Healthcare; providing Epic and Pyxis support/education to all hospitals within the Aspirus system, providing and building

Below: ASHP Midyear Residency showcase. From left to right: Jill Michaud, Pharm.D., BCPS & Director of Pharmacy at Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Kaia Zepke, Pharm.D., Cecilee Rodenkirch, Pharm.D., Timothy Nikstad, RPh, BCPS, Residency Director. (At the time of the picture, Kaia and Cecilee were PGY1 residents and have since graduated and were hired at Aspirus).





Above: East entrance to Aspirus Wausau Hospital

order sets for AWH, and providing intravenous (IV) smart pump support and metrics for AWH, ALH, AMH and Aspirus Riverview Hospital. There are also policies in place to allow inpatient pharmacists to adjust doses based on renal function for all patients, order and adjust vancomycin/aminoglycoside doses and order labs when needed, order heparin and monitor/adjust accordingly, and complete IV to by mouth (po) conversions for proton pump inhibitors, histamine-2 receptor antagonists, vitamins, and antibiotics. Other unique services include review of baseline and routine labs for all patients started on anticoagulants (po and IV), probiotic screening for those on antibiotics, and glycemic management. Numerous pharmacodynamic dosing programs to improve efficacy under the Antimicrobial Stewardship Program continue to be important, such as ensuring meropenem, the preferred carbapenem, is utilized over others.

To provide comprehensive health services, pharmacists collaborate with other healthcare professionals. Pharmacists are recognized as a valuable part of the healthcare team and frequently communicate with physicians, nurses, advanced practice nurse practitioners, physician assistants, dietitians, social workers, surgeons, IT workers, and

regulatory committees. An example of collaboration is the retail pharmacy “Medication Monday,” which is a free brown bag event that was developed to enhance patient medication safety. Patients bring their medications to the pharmacy by appointment, and pharmacists will provide comprehensive medication reviews. This information can then be shared with their primary care provider(s).

To broaden the connection with the community, a group of Aspirus pharmacists recently spoke to Wausau West High School students to encourage interest in pharmacy, and it is their intent to attend other high schools to promote the career of pharmacy. The pharmacy also provides shadowing opportunities for high school and college students. The pharmacy at AWH is an Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) site for student pharmacists who want to work in northern Wisconsin. The hospital also has three postgraduate year one (PGY-1) residency spots. They are involved in the Healthy Marathon County Coalition, which collaborates with community partners to build systems, environments, and a culture that supports health and wellness, including access and affordability of healthcare, healthy aging and oral health care, and reduction of alcohol misuse,

overweight/obesity, suicide, and tobacco use.¹

As an active Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin (PSW) member, Dr. Michaud was on the Board of Directors for two terms. She constantly encourages her pharmacists to attend meetings and participate in poster presentations at the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) and PSW. She also promotes participation in PSW’s Legislative Days.

Raising the Bar

The pharmacy department is a prominent and valuable asset to the healthcare team at AWH due to the unique services provided. For example, prior to surgery, an inpatient pharmacist conducts an in-depth medication review via phone with the patient. For patients in the cardiology unit, the pharmacist is responsible for preparation of home medication orders and post-surgery discharges. Involvement of the pharmacy department ensures continuation of care and proper documentation of the medications a patient requires. The oncology/infusion pharmacy has recently initiated patient consultations and follow-ups to those prescribed an oral chemotherapy agent. This inclusion benefits patients because their questions can



Above: Core inpatient pharmacy with their carousel. Those pictured: Christopher Lloyd, Pharm.D., current PGY1 resident with Lafarah Pringle, pharmacy technician.

be answered before they leave the hospital. At follow-up visits, their side effects can be monitored and discussed. The pharmacy department also oversees oncology and cardiology investigational new drug studies. Insulin management is another unique service provided by the pharmacy that reaches patients with diabetes throughout all units of the hospital. Patients' glucose levels are monitored around the clock by the inpatient pharmacy, and their insulin doses are adjusted accordingly. Due to these services, the pharmacy maintains an active role in patient care for the duration of a patient's visit. Dr. Michaud takes pride in these unique services.

The pharmacy department values the importance of continual learning. For nearly twenty years, pharmacy residents have furthered their knowledge by working

closely with pharmacists and the healthcare team of AWH. The training and qualities of the pharmacists and technicians maintain the integrity of the services they provide. If not already a board-certified pharmacotherapy specialist (BCPS), the pharmacists on staff are encouraged to further their knowledge-base by obtaining this certification and/or specializing in a field. For example, to appropriately manage insulin, pharmacists must participate in scenario based training with follow-up and feedback.

Pharmacists are part of multidisciplinary planning committees for oncology, cardiology, and trauma conferences. A recent conference was the 28th annual Aspirus Heart & Vascular Winter Conference that occurred on February 9, 2018. Some topics included

Transcatheter Mitral Therapy, Advanced Lipid Testing, and Impact of the Gut Microbiome on Cardiovascular and Metabolic Disease. Pharmacists and technicians are encouraged to participate in these events, most of which allow the pharmacists to receive continuing education (CE) credits. Nearly half of the technicians at AWH are certified. For those that are not certified, they are supported to take the proper courses to become certified. Dr. Michaud encourages furthering one's education because it makes them more of an asset to the patient's well-being. The pharmacists and technicians at AWH want to contribute to their community. They provide care they would want to receive, and they practice at the top of their license. Each of Dr. Michaud's employees possess qualities which lead to optimal patient care.

Despite moving out of a patient-centered position, Dr. Michaud is BCPS certified and has renewed it many times over the years. Her focus has changed from patient care to administration and is currently finishing a master's degree in healthcare administration. She is an active advocate of leadership in pharmacy and has served on the PSW Board of Directors, as well as on the Health System Pharmacy Advisory Board. Dr. Michaud is a powerful voice advocating for the profession of pharmacy.

Bumps in the Road

There are currently two challenges that AWH Pharmacy is facing: drug shortages and adequate technician staffing. Regarding drug shortages, two strategies are being implemented. First, the pharmacy is keeping providers up-to-date as shortages emerge, and they are working to provide proper alternatives. For example, gastrointestinal surgeons are now using stricter criteria for parenteral nutrition due to a shortage of amino acids. A second strategy to address the challenge of drug shortages is moving drugs within the Aspirus Hospital system based on patient need. This prevents outdated of drugs. To address the challenge of inadequate technician staffing, the pharmacy is working to hire those who want a career as a pharmacy technician and incorporate students in healthcare fields. Dr. Michaud and the other pharmacists also encourage the technicians to learn and become certified. To solve the "big picture" issue of technicians being underpaid, Dr. Michaud believes there needs to be formal requirements for pharmacy technicians.

One of the biggest practice advancements in the pharmacy was the insulin management program. The major obstacle to implementing this program were the questions, "Why is the pharmacy doing this?" and "Why are their hands in the pot?" Endocrinologists, however, encouraged management of the insulin program by the pharmacy because of the overwhelming number of patients with diabetes in the hospital. Since the pharmacy department had endocrinologists on board, it was easy to secure the support of the other departments, especially when pharmacy management for patients with

diabetes proved to be efficient and quality monitoring showed patient outcomes equal to or better than management by providers.

Moving Forward

Plans for growth include using anti-factor Xa monitoring for Heparin instead of an activated partial thromboplastin time (aPTT). Anti-factor Xa monitoring has been shown to decrease the number of laboratory monitoring tests and shorten the time needed to achieve a therapeutic response with Heparin dosing.² This will help in the monitoring of Heparin dosing and ensure that patients are at therapeutic levels. There are also plans to renovate the cancer center. The cancer center caters to the needs of 30-40 patients a day, and an expansion is needed to create more space for patient care. Renovations are on schedule to be finished this summer.

A change to expect in the future may include embedding pharmacists in ambulatory clinics for population health initiatives. This is to ensure quality care and pharmacist involvement. Pharmacists should be open to change and new opportunities as these changes are set in place. They should keep improving their knowledge base on drug and policy changes, as well as new trends in patient

care. Keeping up with CE trainings and acquiring higher education degrees can help pharmacists stay at the top of their field.

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2018 - 2019 PSW CONFERENCE CALENDAR

June 7-8, 2018 (NEW DATES)

PSW Senior Care Conference

Milwaukee Marriott West, Waukesha

August 2-4, 2018

Leadership Pharmacy Conference (invitation only)

Eagle Ridge Resort, Galena IL

August 23-24, 2018

Immunization Delivery for Pharmacists

Kalahari Resort & Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells

August 23-25, 2018

PSW Annual Meeting

Kalahari Resort & Convention Center, Wisconsin Dell

October 26-27, 2018

PSW Technician Educational Forum

Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center, Rothschild (near Wausau)

March 13, 2019

PSW Legislative Day

Monona Terrace, Madison

February 8-10, 2019

Midwest Pharmacy Expo

Holiday Inn & Conference Center, Des Moines, IA

April 9-10, 2019

PSW Educational Conference

Monona Terrace, Madison

September 12-14, 2019

PSW Annual Meeting

Hyatt Regency, Green Bay