

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

# Business Member Spotlight: Froedtert Ambulatory Clinics

by Cameron N. Cole, 2020 PharmD Candidate, Eric C. Johnson, 2020 PharmD Candidate, Lana Yang, 2020 PharmD Candidate

The Froedtert Health Network, made up of an academic medical center, three community hospitals and over 40 health centers and clinics, has become a prominent name in Wisconsin healthcare. The health network's goal is providing patient care, innovation, medical research and education.<sup>1</sup> The world-class services provided by Froedtert Health Network spans both outpatient and inpatient settings.

Froedtert Health has numerous clinics, providing care to a diverse and growing patient population. Ambulatory care pharmacy services are available in infectious disease, anticoagulation, endocrine, metabolic syndrome, transplant, pulmonary, gastrointestinal, anemia, internal medicine, primary care, cardiology, rheumatology, and hematology/oncology clinics.<sup>2</sup>

## Day to Day Practice

Within the ambulatory care clinics, there are a large number of pharmacists providing care. Most clinics are covered by at least one on-site pharmacist that is integrated into the healthcare team; remote pharmacist coverage is provided to other clinics. Froedtert Health ambulatory care pharmacists have completed at least a postgraduate year one (PGY1) residency. Postgraduate year two (PGY2) residencies are preferred but not required. Froedtert offers both PGY1 and PGY2 residencies for specializing. Board certification is also preferred for ambulatory practice, but not required. Though they are still a part of the pharmacy department as a whole, ambulatory care pharmacists are part of a more diverse team of interdisciplinary caregivers.

The clinic interdisciplinary teams

vary from site to site, but may include physicians, advanced practice providers, medical residents, nurses, therapists, social workers and pharmacists. Each discipline understands what unique skills and knowledge pharmacists have and recognizes them as highly valued assets.

A pharmacist's typical week changes depending on the patient population for which they provide care. The pharmacists within each clinic may be responsible for assessing and optimizing medication regimens and immunization needs, completing medication histories and reconciliations, demonstrating proper administration/injection techniques, answering drug information questions, and monitoring patient lab values.<sup>2</sup> Many clinics utilize pharmacists to provide direct patient care and education. The direct care provided by pharmacists can take many forms including face-to face office visits and remote interactions via telephone. Pharmacists are able to provide this care through collaborative practice agreements with providers who delegate these responsibilities, allowing pharmacists to utilize their clinical judgement. In addition to clinic responsibilities, these pharmacists participate in research and present their findings at various national conferences. Ambulatory care pharmacists also teach, either lecturing in their area of expertise or precepting students and residents.

## Raising the Bar

The interventions made by pharmacists have a positive effect on patient health outcomes. The ambulatory care pharmacists at the Froedtert Health Network are in a position to make a big impact in multiple ways such as constructing practice alerts in electronic medical records and implementing projects directed at improving patient care.

Before assigning a pharmacist to a clinic, the pharmacy department evaluates if the need for a pharmacist is appropriate or if the role is better filled by another provider. If it is determined that a pharmacist is appropriate to fulfill the clinic needs, a pilot is often initiated to assess its success.

Once a pharmacist is embedded in a clinic, the services they provide are continuously reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate and that they are adding value. Data are compiled and analyzed to improve the pharmacist role. Patient outcomes and lab values, types and quantity of interventions, patient readmission rates, and clinic staff and patient satisfaction are a few factors that are considered. Then changes are made to optimize patient care.

Froedtert Health also aims higher through its affiliation with other establishments. Being associated with the Medical College of Wisconsin aligns Froedtert Health with unique opportunities for collaboration and partnership. This relationship manifests itself through interesting research projects, access to clinical specialists, and education. Froedtert Health's partnership with Concordia University Wisconsin, Medical College of Wisconsin, and University of Wisconsin-Madison schools of pharmacy provide opportunities for teaching and precepting. Student pharmacists in their final year of education can complete rotations at Froedtert Health's primary care, specialty pharmacy, anticoagulation, and specialty clinics.

## Bumps in the Road

As with any well-known and respected health system, Froedtert Health Network has overcome obstacles. One challenge that has faced Froedtert Health's ambulatory

care pharmacists has been receiving reimbursement for pharmacist services. Froedtert Health follows a patient-centered model, providing care that is as convenient to the patient as possible. This can be challenging due to pharmacists' lack of provider status. To help validate and recognize pharmacists as essential providers on the health care team, the pharmacy department is producing data that demonstrates how ambulatory care pharmacists improve patient outcomes. With strong, indisputable evidence connecting pharmacists and patient outcomes, attaining provider status for pharmacists may become more achievable.

Reimbursement for patient services are just one barrier that the Froedtert Network has faced. The roles that a pharmacist plays in clinics evolve with the ever-changing nature of health care. Clear understanding of these responsibilities can become challenging to keep up with as the needs of the clinic change, both for the pharmacist as well as other health providers. Furthermore, the capacity of a pharmacist also changes with the shifting of roles and functions. Froedtert Health overcomes these challenges through effective communication within the pharmacy department, as well as with each clinic to ensure that responsibilities of each ambulatory care pharmacist are known.

## Moving Forward

Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin is always identifying ways to provide the best possible care to all its patients; it is this quality of care that has led to the high level of trust within their health system. Froedtert Health also seeks to create a more seamless transition for patients between inpatient, ambulatory, and outpatient pharmacy services. Allowing the patient to stay within one system can decrease the use of multiple pharmacies. Not only would this make providing care easier for the provider, but it would also create a more positive experience and impact on life for the patient.

Jordan Spillane, PharmD of Froedtert's ambulatory care pharmacy service advises anyone interested in pursuing a career in ambulatory care to try new things – to not be afraid to say yes to new and exciting opportunities. Broadening ones' horizons is



a great way to gain experience in a number of different facets within pharmacy. This is also a great way to network with others in a field of interest.

Tim Hinkley PharmD, MS of Froedtert's specialty and home delivery pharmacy explains that PGY2 residencies are not the rate-limiting step to being able to practice in the ambulatory care. He describes that in the ambulatory care setting, clinical knowledge is not the only skill needed. Though it is important, there are a plethora of skills that set a pharmacist up for success in an ambulatory setting. Ambulatory care pharmacists need great time management habits to juggle numerous tasks throughout the day. Additionally, pharmacists must be able to function independently to complete these tasks. Project management skills and entrepreneurship are also useful to ambulatory care pharmacist as clinics are always looking to optimize health care through creative and revolutionary ideas. Excellent communication is required in the ambulatory setting because patient care is almost always managed by multiple health care providers. This skill is not only beneficial for providers, but is also advantageous for patient interactions. Ambulatory care pharmacists have the unique opportunity of forming long lasting relationships with their patients. The use of effective communication can help build trust and rapport with them. Together, these skills fully equip a pharmacist to contribute meaningfully in an ambulatory care clinic.

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Cameron Cole, Eric Johnson, and Lana Yang are 3rd Year Doctor of Pharmacy Candidates at Concordia University Wisconsin School of Pharmacy in Mequon, WI.

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## References

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