

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF PHARMACY STUDENT WRITING CLUB:

Member Spotlight: Lindsey Ladell, PharmD, BCPS

by Tracy Zook, PharmD

Lindsey Ladell, PharmD, BCPS is the high reliability organization program manager at the Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Hospital (Milwaukee VA) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. After graduating in 2011 from the UW-Madison School of Pharmacy, she went on to complete her postgraduate year one (PGY1) and year two (PGY2) training at the Milwaukee VA. In addition to her PGY2, she also completed the Chief Resident in Quality and Safety (CRQS) program alongside physician and nursing colleagues.

Ladell was the first resident to complete the PGY2 residency program in Medication Use Safety, and the first pharmacist in the nation to complete the CRQS program. She jokes, "I was born and raised at the Milwaukee VA." Following the completion of her PGY2 program, Ladell was hired by the Milwaukee VA as a clinical pharmacy specialist, patient safety manager. She currently serves as the facility's high reliability organization program manager.

Raising the Bar

Throughout her 11-year career at the VA, Ladell has been passionate about expanding the reach of pharmacy into roles that have not traditionally been held by pharmacists, demonstrating value and opening doors for others. She was the first graduate of the PGY2 Medication Use Safety residency and CRQS programs. Upon graduation, she became the first pharmacist to serve in the patient safety manager role at the Milwaukee VA, where she oversaw their patient safety reporting system and a wide variety of organization-wide improvement efforts. When Ladell took the patient safety manager role, there were only a handful of VA medical centers across the country that had pharmacists in these types of roles; since then, at least four other sites in Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 12, Milwaukee's region of care, have added

pharmacists in those roles. There's been another pharmacist added to the patient safety manager team at the Milwaukee VA, too. "Process-based thinking and patient safety comes second nature to pharmacists; it is our superpower. It just makes sense that we belong in roles where the responsibilities include dissecting processes to look for patient safety improvements," Ladell says.

Her strengths with shaping and developing new ideas, as well as being comfortable paving her own way, were instrumental in launching a new high reliability organization (HRO) program in December of 2019, launching the Milwaukee VA on its journey toward zero patient or employee harm. High reliability is a concept taken from other industries, such as nuclear power or the airline industry, that



Left: Lindsey Ladell, PharmD, BCPS

Below: Clement Zablocki VA Medical Center, Milwaukee WI



operate in complex, high-risk environments but have very low catastrophic error rates. Many organizations, including the Veterans Health Administration, have begun to translate the lessons from these industries into healthcare. In this role, Ladell works with the executive leadership team on shaping purposeful leadership, cultural and improvement efforts across the organization.

In 2021, Ladell was promoted into a new leadership role, high reliability organization program manager, adding both a social worker and a nurse to her team. In this role, she also serves alongside Todd Burner, MD, who is a hospitalist and rheumatologist at the Milwaukee VA. "My time as a trainee taught me the value of working closely with an interprofessional team which I continue to value today," says Ladell. "Despite us all working towards the same cause, each of us have different perspectives that are incredibly valuable."

Bumps in the Road

Just when the high reliability program was launching in March 2020, Ladell was asked to serve on the Milwaukee VA's Covid-19 incident command team. Like other areas in healthcare, day-to-day practice became less defined and more responsive. "At first we needed to identify how to provide safety for both our employees and our patients," says Ladell. This was accomplished by creating and implementing screening tools and additional safety

measures to slow the spread of virus. Ladell's ability to thrive in new environments and with interprofessional teams allowed her to use her skills to support the medical center during an uncertain time with ever-changing needs. She had a hand in everything from standing up a drive-thru Covid-19 testing site to pulling together a walk-in, weekend vaccination clinic that vaccinated hundreds of Veterans in less than 24 hours.

In 2021, Ladell was asked to take on a leadership role serving as the planning section chief of the incident command team for the Milwaukee VA. During this time, her team stood up unvaccinated employee testing operations for the Milwaukee VA. Going where the organization needed her required her to pause some lanes of effort for her high reliability program. But she had the opportunity to bake high reliability concepts into the work that she did with incident command, in leadership, communication, and the prioritization of patient and employee safety.

Moving Forward

With some slowing of the pandemic and a return to a day-to-day practice, Ladell has a lot of excitement about how the high reliability program can serve both the employees and patients at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. During this new normal, the high reliability team has

been focusing efforts on employee safety, which is a unique twist on high reliability in healthcare, where the focus is often on patient safety. "If our employees are not safe, we cannot expect them to keep our Veterans safe," says Ladell. Current and future efforts include a focus on reducing employee burnout and the prevention of workplace violence. Additionally, her team will also be working to embed high reliability behaviors into teams across the Milwaukee VA through the launch of a clinical team training program, which is modeled after the airline industry's crew resource management program that supported that industry's journey towards high reliability. When asked about when she will consider her program a success, Ladell says, "When I do new employee orientation, I ask our new employees to raise their hands if they themselves or a family member has been impacted by a medical error. Every time that question is asked, over half of the packed room raises their hand. My hope is that someday I ask, and no one raises their hand. Until then, I will keep at this important work."

At the time of this interview Tracy Zook was a Doctor of Pharmacy Student on APPE rotation with the Medical College of Wisconsin School of Pharmacy in Milwaukee, WI.

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