

High Tech: The Advanced role of Pharmacy Technicians in Clinical Trials Pharmacy

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Background

Royal North Shore Hospital pharmacy department introduced a full-time, aseptically trained clinical trials (CT) pharmacy technician to assist in the day-to-day running of the unit due to the increasing number clinical trials undertaken, covering a range of medical specialties.

Aim

To introduce a specialised pharmacy technician into the CT service area and assess their impact on the pharmacist's efficiency and productivity.

The secondary aim was to determine technician job satisfaction levels.

Method

A retrospective analysis of the number of trials coordinated by pharmacy and quarterly revenue was completed pre and post-implementation of a technician service. The technician completed Good Clinical Practice training and a competency based assessment prior to undertaking trial specific duties. This included:

- Ordering, receipting, dispensing and destruction of investigational products (IP) as per study protocols
- Maintaining accountability and relevant site documentation
- Reviewing study protocols and assisting with the preparation of budgets and study specific documents.

Job satisfaction surveys were also completed to determine pre and post-rotation job satisfaction levels.

Results

Following the addition of a dedicated CT technician, Pharmacy undertook an additional 14 trials, increased quarterly revenue and reduced the number of administrative tasks being completed by the pharmacist (Box 1).

Box 1: Examples of tasks completed by technicians in CT Pharmacy

- Daily temperature monitoring
- Site folder set-up
- Site folder maintenance
- Booking trial monitors for monitoring visits
- Responding to phone and email queries
- Assisting and answering queries during monitoring visits

Results (continued)

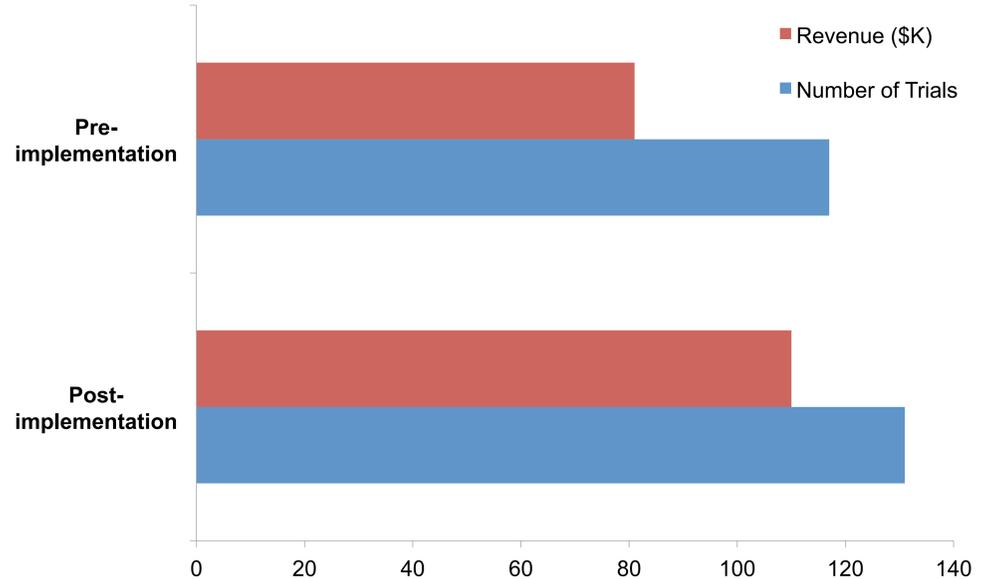


Figure 1: Number of trials and quarterly revenue of Clinical Trials Pharmacy pre and post-implementation of a Clinical Trials technician

In addition, prior aseptic training by the CT technician allowed them to evaluate production protocols and provide specialised advice on the manufacturing processes of each IP to production technicians and trial coordinators. This enabled more accurate budgets to be prepared and streamlined the setup of aseptic production worksheets.

Technicians reported an average increase in job satisfaction of 50% after completing their CT rotation. 100% of pharmacists surveyed felt the addition of a proactive technician to CT was essential for the day to day running of the unit; it increased job satisfaction and they felt more supported.

Conclusion

The addition of a technician to the CT team has been positive, allowing for an increase in the number of trials undertaken by the department and reduced the administrative tasks completed by the CT pharmacist.

Overall, the inclusion of a pharmacy technician in the CT Pharmacy has increased efficiency and productivity of both pharmacists and the unit, expanded the technician role, boosted technician job satisfaction and enhanced technician scope of practice.

Future directions

With a large number of early phase and complex trials to be started up in the upcoming months, a business case for an extra pharmacy technician and pharmacist in the CT Pharmacy has also been presented to the Executive Unit to increase staffing levels.

