

# What Matters Most?

## Setting Priorities to Make a 7 Day Service a Reality

AUTHORED BY: Jenny Crane, Lindsey Griffiths, Helen Dowling – Pharmacy Department, Royal North Shore Hospital, Northern Sydney Local Health District, NSW

### Background

NSW hospital pharmacy departments have low staffing levels and struggle to provide weekend services, which are usually dispensary-based.

We decided to extend the weekend pharmacy service at Royal North Shore Hospital from a Saturday half day dispensary service to a clinical service on both Saturdays and Sundays.

As no extra funding was available, we had to achieve this within existing resources.

### Method

All positions were reviewed as part of a redesign process. Some resources were able to be redeployed from weekdays to the weekend, resulting in a Weekend Duty Pharmacist position plus some extra pharmacist and pharmacy technician time.

Clinical input is maximised and costs kept within budget by the following strategies:

- The dispensary is closed other than on Saturday mornings, when the previously established dispensary service continues.
- The weekend pharmacist is based in Emergency.
- Medications are only dispensed on Saturday afternoons or Sundays if not available elsewhere.
- Weekday pharmacists refer patients to the weekend pharmacist for review using the ISBAR process.
- Final year pharmacy students are employed on the weekend and trained to assist the pharmacist with clinical activities.
- A 7 day roster rather than overtime is used to staff the weekend.
- There is a cost offset in reduced weekend call-outs for the on-call pharmacist.

### Results

In a survey of medical, nursing and pharmacy staff, 87% of respondents agreed that patient care was improved by the 7 day service, and 63% agreed that there was a positive impact on their own work (figure 4).

Averaging results for the first 9 months, each weekend

- 15 newly admitted patients had their medications reconciled (figure 1)
- An additional 5 patients were discharged (figure 2)
- 85% of weekday pharmacist referrals were reviewed by the weekend pharmacist (figure 3)
- There were 2 direct referrals to the pharmacist from Emergency Department clinicians

### Improvements to Patient Care

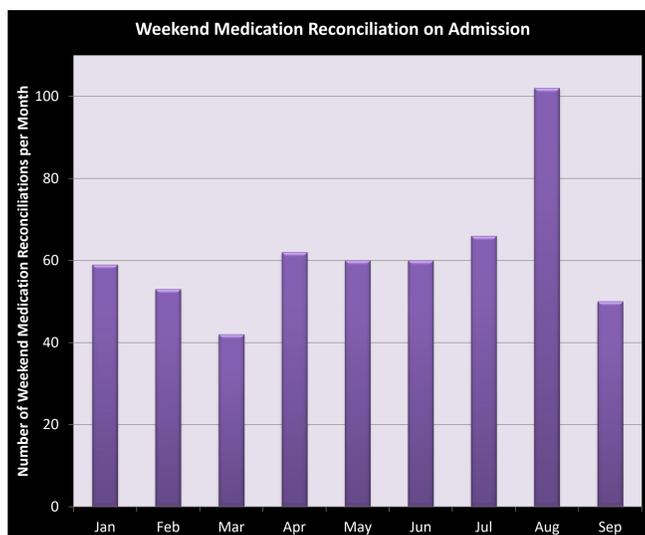


Figure 1: Weekend medication reconciliation

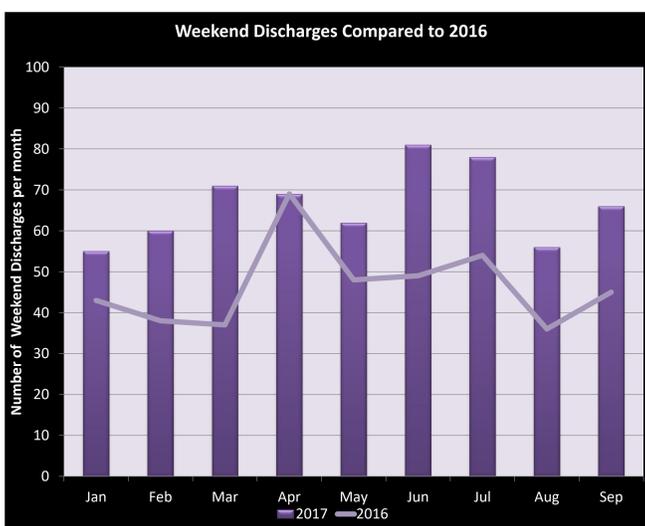


Figure 2: Improvements in weekend discharges

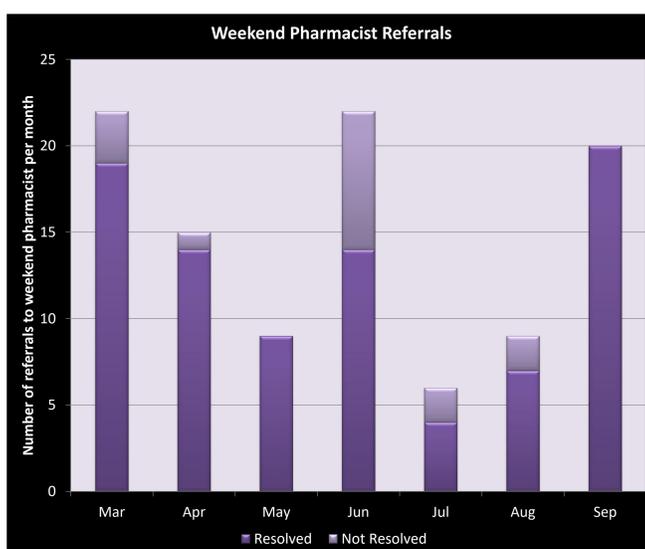


Figure 3: Number of weekend pharmacist referrals

### Stakeholder Feedback

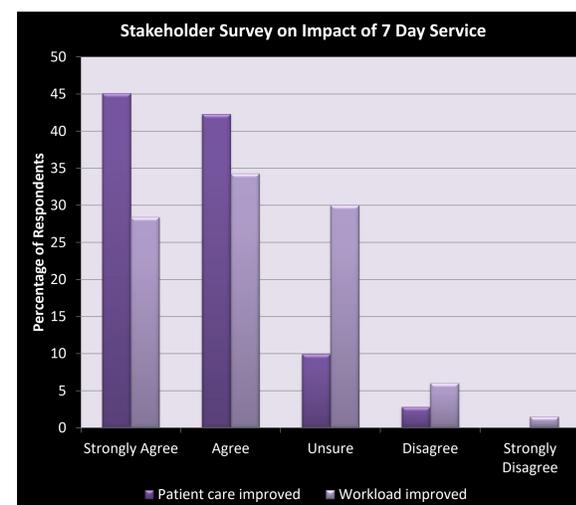


Figure 4: Results of stakeholder survey

### Discussion

Pharmacy is so strongly associated with supply of medications that it is challenging to propose a service that is not supply-focused.

The factors which enabled us to implement the clinically-focused service were:

- Support from the hospital administration to pursue this option
- A stakeholder survey which identified “increased clinical pharmacist time on the ward” as the most desirable enhancement to the pharmacy service
- Automated dispensing cabinets in most wards which means that a wide range of medications is available
- Employment of final year pharmacy students to support the weekend pharmacist on Sundays.

### Conclusion

By prioritising areas of maximum patient benefit and moving away from a supply-based model, we were able to provide a well-received, clinically focused 7 day service within existing resources.

The value of the service has been so well accepted that the hospital administration has recently funded an additional 8 hours of pharmacist time at the weekend to allow more discharge medications to be dispensed without compromising clinical activities.