ASHP Foundation Selects Research Team to Develop a Drug Therapy Management Complexity Score

Major contract supports creation of a tool to prioritize pharmacist-provided drug therapy management

BETHPESDA, Md. (August 7, 2013) — Health care reform is a high national priority for the public, policymakers, payers, health professionals and health care organizations. Reform is being driven by multiple factors, including patient and caregiver demand for higher quality and safer care at lower costs; health professionals who are pursuing safer care for our society; health professional shortages; and demographic, social and economic influences.

In November 2010, the urgent need to address these changes in health care led the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) and the ASHP Research and Education Foundation to hold the Pharmacy Practice Model Initiative (PPMI) Summit to develop recommendations for future pharmacy practice models that optimize the use of pharmacists as the members of the interprofessional team.

One of the most important recommendations that came out of the PPMI Summit was one to develop and validate a numerical complexity score that could be used to identify hospitalized patients who require higher level pharmacist-provided drug therapy management. As a result of a request for proposals, the ASHP Foundation has now awarded a $499,000 contract to Almut G. Winterstein, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Pharmaceutical Outcomes and Policy in the University of Florida (UF) College of Pharmacy.

Dr. Winterstein has led an active research program involving the analysis and prevention of preventable adverse drug events (pADEs) in inpatient and outpatient settings for more than a decade and has acted as a consultant for the Florida Office of Rural Health for 11 years, working to improve the medication safety infrastructure and related technical health information in critical access hospitals. She has more than 200 peer-reviewed manuscripts and abstracts in pharmacoepidemiology and patient safety research. Her funding for previous research studies has come from several federal agencies, including the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Food and Drug Administration. Dr. Winterstein has been involved with the ASHP Foundation since 2001, when she received her first funding as faculty; she has been a member of the Research Advisory Panel and a Research Boot Camp faculty member since 2005.

Dr. Winterstein and her UF Health colleagues will develop a complexity score with data from the two largest UF-affiliated hospitals, UF Health Shands and UF Health Jacksonville, representing a diverse case mix with good representation of pediatrics, indigent patients and minorities. The complexity score will prospectively identify patients at greatest need for pharmacist-provided drug therapy management and will use readily available information from the hospitals’ electronic health records (EHRs) to predict the
risk for pADEs that would require pharmacist intervention. Once finalized, the score will be validated in 13 field-testing hospitals that vary in case mix, geographic location, teaching affiliation and EHR system.

The goal of the project is to determine factors that identify patients at high risk of pADEs that would, in turn, allow individual institutions to reallocate pharmacy personnel and resources to optimize patient safety. The entire project will be carried out and completed over a 2-year period.

“Given the critical need to identify a Drug Therapy Management Complexity Score and supported by largest financial commitment by the ASHP Foundation to date, a nationally-recognized, multidisciplinary team of clinicians and researchers was assembled,” said Michael J. Miller, R.Ph., Dr.P.H., FAPhA, an associate professor in the Department of Pharmacy: Clinical and Administrative Sciences at The University of Oklahoma in Tulsa, Okla., who led the ASHP Foundation’s external review panel. “The multidisciplinary team deployed a multi-stage, peer-review process to review, score and select the top application from a very competitive pool. The team members sought to identify the application that ideally balanced scientific rigor as well as practical translation and application of the findings that had the greatest utility for the broadest sector of health-system pharmacists and ASHP membership.”

“The participants in the 2010 Pharmacy Practice Model Initiative called for development of a system to identify complex patients who should be prioritized to receive higher level pharmacist-provided drug therapy management,” said ASHP Foundation CEO and Executive Vice President Stephen J. Allen, M.S., FASHP. “The ASHP Foundation is excited to support this groundbreaking work at the University of Florida that will validate the use of a complexity score to identify those inpatients who are at greatest risk for developing preventable adverse drug events. We expect that use of this validated score in hospitals across the United States will result in better patient care and optimized use of the pharmacist as a health care team member who is responsible and accountable for patients’ outcomes.”

“This is a particularly important award for me because it feels like the pinnacle of my medication safety research and my work in the pharmacy profession,” said Winterstein. “In fact, the very first grant I received as junior faculty member was from the ASHP Foundation, and it was focused on the epidemiology of preventable adverse drug events. This new award will synthesize all this experience in a tool that will hopefully make a significant contribution to inpatient care and patient outcomes.”

For more information about the Drug Therapy Management Complexity Score grant project, visit www.ashpfoundation.org/complexityscore.

About the ASHP Foundation
The ASHP Research and Education Foundation (www.ashpfoundation.org) was established in 1968 by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) (www.ashp.org) as a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. As the philanthropic arm of ASHP, our vision is that patient outcomes improve because of the leadership and clinical skills of pharmacists, as vital members of the health care team, accountable for safe and effective medication use. Our mission is to improve the health and well-being of patients in health systems through appropriate, safe and effective medication use.

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