

Medication Errors Recovered by Emergency Department Pharmacists

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Abstract

Emergency departments (EDs) face special challenges in their mission of providing high quality, efficient and safe care to a highly diverse population of patients, ranging from critically ill patients to those with minor issues. Medication prescribing, transcription, dispensing, administration and monitoring in EDs may be more hazardous than in other areas. In some inpatient settings, clinical pharmacists have been demonstrated to reduce potentially harmful medication-related errors (MEs). Because of the additional costs and challenges associated with pharmacist staffing of EDs, more data are needed to demonstrate the effects of pharmacists on ED patient safety. Therefore, we propose to conduct a pilot study of the current role of ED pharmacists in the recovery of MEs. The primary outcomes of interest will be the frequency and type of MEs recovered by ED pharmacists.

The proposed study will be conducted in four academic medical centers geographically distributed across the United States and with established ED pharmacist programs. Our research team includes nationally recognized leaders in medication safety research. This pilot study is intended to develop a platform for future large scale prospective controlled studies that will comprehensively demonstrate the effects of ED pharmacist interventions on medication safety. In addition to the effects on patient safety, future studies will also evaluate the cost effectiveness of staffing pharmacists in EDs, critical information for hospital administrators and policy-makers.