

MEDICATION SAFETY OFFICER'S HANDBOOK

Connie M. Larson, PharmD

Associate Director of Pharmacy, Safety and Quality
Medication Safety Officer

University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences
System

Clinical Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice
University of Illinois at Chicago College of Pharmacy
Chicago, IL

Deb Saine, MS, RPh, FASHP, FSMSO

Program Manager, Medication Safety
Winchester Medical Center
Winchester, VA

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists®
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to medication safety officers and other medication and patient safety leaders. May you find inspiration and motivation to carry on this important work.

To the patients and families who have experienced a medication error, we are committed to working for a safer health care system for all.

—Connie Larson and Deb Saine

I would like to dedicate this book to Toby Clark for encouraging and fostering my interest in medication safety work by creating a medication safety officer position for me many(!) years ago. Also, I would like to thank my children, Julia, Emma, and Jack for their love and ongoing support.

—Connie

To my mom, the first pharmacist I ever knew, and my dad, who guided me with wisdom and love.

—Deb

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Preface

Welcome to our world! The medication safety officer's arena is a fascinating, challenging, dynamic space. As medication safety officers, we need to combine our specialized knowledge of medications with expertise in quality improvement principles as well as leadership skills to bring people together toward a common goal: keeping our patients free from harm. We both received questions such as "Where do I start," "What do I need to know?" We realized that there was no resource with the right balance of information. The idea of a how-to guide seemed like the ideal way to help practitioners dedicated to medication safety work. The *Medication Safety Officer's Handbook* is a resource that not only helps get you started but takes you down the path to safety.

The *Handbook* is structured to provide a guide for both new and current medication safety officers. But even if you don't have the title, certainly all health care professionals have a responsibility to improve medication safety wherever we practice. We wrote this book as a go-to resource in approaching and handling problems and challenges in your workplace. There are practical tools and tips for everyone interested in medication safety work and quality improvement in general. We have provided examples from a variety of places that you will be able to apply or adapt for your own workplace.

We found authors as excited as we are about medication safety to share their expertise and ideas. Our goal was to include key topics vital to the medication safety officer and provide a blend of knowledge, responsibilities, tools, and tips from people in the field. We feel this book distinguishes itself by providing direction for the unique role and responsibilities of a medication safety officer while providing practical strategies for applying the concepts of medication safety work into your daily practice.

Questioning minds wanted to know, and the answers may be found in the following pages:

- What are MSO responsibilities?
- There are so many things to do—how do I prioritize?
- With no formal authority, how do I make change happen?
- What should I include in a medication safety assessment for a formulary review?
- Help! How do I design a template for a modified root cause analysis?
- What should I include in a medication safety orientation for staff?

- Where can I find more information on a medication safety topic?
- Alphabet soup! What do all these acronyms mean?

Looking at the completed work, it does beg the question: Can anyone be and do all these things? Do not be intimidated! Even in the best-case scenario, with plenty of help, no one can be an expert on all things. The good news is you don't have to know it all—we've given you the resources and information from a variety of dedicated people to help you do your job better and improve medication safety in your workplace.

Medication safety is a journey! To quote Margaret Mead:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Connie M. Larson

Deb Saine

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Contributors

L. Hayley Burgess, PharmD

Director of Medication Safety and System Innovations
Clinical Services Group
HCA Management Service
Nashville, TN

Kathryn A. Crea, PharmD, BCPS

Director of Accreditation and Patient Safety Officer
Riverside Methodist Hospital—OhioHealth
Columbus, OH
Assistant Professor
University of Findlay College of Pharmacy
Findlay, OH

Lynn E. Eschenbacher, PharmD, MBA

Assistant Director, Clinical Services
Director, PGY-1 Pharmacy Residency Program
Chair, ASHP Section of Inpatient Care Practitioners
WakeMed Health & Hospitals
Raleigh, NC

Sarah Hein, PharmD

Medication Safety Specialist
Tampa General Hospital
Tampa, FL

Joanne G. Kowiatek, RPh, MPM, FASHP

Oncology Consultant Pharmacist
UPMC CancerCenter
Pittsburgh, PA

Connie M. Larson, PharmD

Associate Director of Pharmacy, Safety and Quality
Medication Safety Officer
University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System
Clinical Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice
University of Illinois at Chicago College of Pharmacy
Chicago, IL

Karla M. Miller, PharmD, BCPP

Assistant Vice President
Pharmacy Services & Clinical Therapeutics
Clinical Services Group
HCA Management Service
Nashville, TN

Marjorie Shaw Phillips, MS, RPh, FASHP

Pharmacy Coordinator, Clinical Research & Education
Georgia Regents Medical Center Pharmacy
Clinical Professor of Pharmacy Practice
University of Georgia College of Pharmacy
Augusta, GA

Deb Saine, MS, RPh, FASHP, FSMSO

Program Manager, Medication Safety
Winchester Medical Center
Winchester, VA

Susan J. Skledar, RPh, MPH, FASHP

Associate Professor
School of Pharmacy
University of Pittsburgh
Clinical Pharmacist
UPMC Pharmacy Health System Formulary
Management/Drug Use Policy Team
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
Department of Pharmacy
Pittsburgh, PA

Ann E. Wehmeyer, PharmD, BCPS

Senior Patient Safety Specialist
Department of Performance Improvement and Clinical Effectiveness
Rush University Medical Center
Chicago, IL

Lisa M. Hanlon Wilhelm, BS Pharm, RPh

Medication Safety and Compliance Specialist
Penn State Hershey Medical Center
Department of Pharmacy
Hershey, PA

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Deb would like to acknowledge the pharmacy directors with whom she has worked. To Bill Herbert from Madison: thank you for your vision—you created a pharmacist position dedicated to medication safety in 1990, before MSOs were widely known. Thanks for the opportunity to embark on what has become a career-defining path. To Bob Theriault from Lebanon: thanks for the autonomy—you allowed me free reign to explore and develop our medication safety officer position, helping me grow it into a force for positive change. I especially appreciate your "permission" to "stay late and work hard." To Tonya Smith and Bonnie Pitt from Winchester: thank you for supporting my professional service and leadership activities. You've encouraged me to explore and experience a variety of medication safety practices both across the country and abroad. I would like to acknowledge the inaugural members of the Medication Safety Section Advisory Group (SAG). Our insightful discussions greatly expanded my knowledge base and helped bring medication safety to the forefront of pharmacy practice. Thank you, with much love, to my children, Beth, Julie, and Kevin, for accepting "the book" as a regular presence in our lives. Lastly, thank you to my husband, Pat, for his inspiration, advice, and always—for the adventure.

