

Getting Involved in the Organization

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CHAPTER

2

Key Terms

Balanced Scorecard—A tool to display and link the organization's mission and vision to the strategic goals and objectives.

Dashboard—An “at-a-glance” visual display of selected metrics or key performance indicators often used to track the individual initiatives, goals, and objectives at a more local level.

Mistake/Error-Proofing—Implementation of fail-safe mechanisms to prevent errors from occurring with a process; for example, an ATM that gives the debit card back before the cash so that the card is not forgotten.

Team Charter—A written document defining a team's mission, scope, structure, and objectives; serves to communicate the team's focus and direction for team members, organizational leaders, and other work groups.

Introduction

Patient safety is the responsibility of everyone in health care. The role of the medication safety officer (MSO) is to guide and coordinate the organization's medication safety activities. To be successful, it is critical for the MSO to be involved in the organization to ensure the safe use of medications. The MSO must analyze the medication safety data to identify trends and recommend the priorities for the organization. The MSO must also be proactive to ensure that the entire medication-use process has been examined and strategies for safety are developed to prevent harm. The MSO should use tools such as safety self-assessments, literature, and events from other organizations to reflect on his or her own processes to prevent errors. Engaging key stakeholders will increase the acceptance of the priorities and result in successful implementation of improvement efforts. The core responsibilities of the

MSO in an organization include participating as a knowledge expert and a consultant on committees focused on safety, quality, technology, policies and procedures (PPs), clinical care guidelines, Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals, and new product selection. Gaining visibility in the organization by presenting educational sessions helps to support the MSO's efforts to encourage every health care provider to participate in the improvement of safety related to medications. The MSO is a unique role that combines medication-use process and clinical expertise, process improvement methodologies, project management, leadership abilities, and interpersonal relationship skills to achieve improved outcomes for patients.

Getting Started

When starting at a new organization or new to the medication safety role, there are several key activities that should be included in the initial planning for getting involved:

- **Flowcharting the entire medication-use process.** One of the first steps should be to flowchart the entire medication-use process. "Walking" the process and developing a flowchart will allow the MSO to have a strong foundation and understanding of the medication-use process at that organization. This knowledge is essential because one of the MSO's role is to guide process improvements. If there is not a strong understanding of the process, then it is extremely difficult to participate in activities to review the system failures to ensure reduction of harm to patients.
- **Meeting with key personnel.** Arrange meetings with key individuals from different departments involved in the medication-use process including, but not limited to, risk managers, performance/quality improvement director, nurse managers and educators, respiratory therapy director, catheterization laboratory director, lead anesthesiologist, or certified registered nurse anesthetist, and medical director. A simple face-to-face introduction starts a relationship, so that when an event occurs or proactive work is to be conducted it is not a cold call. Trust is an important component of the safety process; therefore, starting with introductions early on can help build credibility and network contacts. The MSO should also identify the different committees or teams that review and address the organization's safety. Attending meeting(s) as a guest enables the MSO to determine which committees will be valuable to join.
- **Developing a strategic plan.** An additional key activity is to develop a strategic plan and goals so the MSO performs the best job possible on projects and process planning. When getting started in the organization, it can be difficult at times to keep focused on medication safety and developing and implementing actions to prevent patient harm. Because safety is a vital part of every aspect of patient care and the medication-use process, it is very easy to be assigned more projects than it is possible to complete.