

# Putting It All Together: The Effective Clinical Coordinator

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## Introduction

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Being a clinical coordinator is an excellent opportunity to see if you enjoy the management aspect of pharmacy. It is a great first step from only participating in direct patient care activities. The blend between developing a clinical practice and maintaining the management/leadership side of pharmacy will help you determine opportunities for your future. Some pharmacists find they really enjoy a blend of both and remain clinical coordinators their entire career. Some pharmacists find they really miss the day-to-day direct patient care activities and return to being clinical pharmacists. Finally, some pharmacists find they enjoy management and leadership and pursue leadership roles. The wealth of available opportunities is why it's great to be a pharmacist.

## Clinical Practice, Staff Development, Competency, and Trust

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Keeping up your clinical practice can be challenging. You must stay on top of the recent evidence-based medicine by reading journals and critically evaluating the information, as well as subscribing to Listservs to see what your peers are considering in their practices. Using this information to determine areas of advancement for the pharmacy department is critical to expand and develop existing services. You and your staff can make a positive impact on patient care by having and using a clear strategic plan to guide your involvement in the organization and provide a strong infrastructure. Hardwiring your department with a long-term strategic plan that will be nimble and adjusting with acute trends will ensure your staff and senior leaders are confident in your leadership abilities. In addition, you must keep your staff members up-to-date by using active-learning techniques, such as the flipped classroom and small groups. Assessing their competency so you know they are retaining and applying what you have taught them is essential. Having the best ideas and new services to start are not enough to ensure success if your team is not ready or is not making the correct patient care recommendations. You need to invest

in your staff on a continual basis and reassess that knowledge as well. It is important to be an authentic leader who is clear and transparent with your staff. The more your staff trusts you, the more effective you will be in implementing new ideas or services. Above all, you must do your best not to violate that trust. Sometimes you will have to make decisions that will be difficult, and sometimes you may not be able to share all information, but if your staff members know that you have their best interest in mind, you will succeed. Always think about how you would want to hear the message and what you would want to know.

## Key Relationships and Project Management

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Developing trust with those outside of your department will help ensure your success as a clinical coordinator. You will be collaborating with many departments, including patient safety, risk management, finance, materials management, nursing, and medical staff. Developing the foundation and infrastructure for these relationships far in advance of needing them is key to your effectiveness. It is much easier to work with people you already know rather than cold-calling them when you need a favor, their opinion, or assistance in critical times. Within your department, clinical and operations staff work extremely close together and need to be aware of what each other is doing. As a clinical coordinator, your responsibilities extend beyond clinical areas to include a strong operations component. For example, in pediatrics the best practice would be pulling up individual oral syringes for each patient rather than having bulk bottles for the nurses to pull up their own doses. The clinical aspect could be helping to determine the medications and dosing, and the operations aspect would be where to perform pulling up the oral syringes, which oral syringes to use, and how to build this in the informatics systems.

You should be involved in all aspects of an initiative to ensure safe and effective implementation for the patients and the staff. Your guidance and feedback to each team working on the initiative will ensure its success. When the initiative is ready for implementation, you should clearly communicate to your staff members the new expectations and hold them

accountable. If an initiative is initially followed, but within 6 months it is no longer used, then you must determine if there is a better way to do it, if staff members need a refresher on the process, and if they need a reminder about your expectations and their accountability for adhering to the plan. You will gain respect if you clearly set expectations and hold employees accountable. Helping staff members understand why an initiative is being implemented increases better adoption and incorporation into their daily routine.

## Clinical Expertise—Formulary and Cost-Savings Ideas

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As the department's clinical expert, it is imperative that you keep up with evidence-based medicine to ensure you implement and provide the best patient care. Reviewing order-sets and computerized prescriber order-entry programming on the front end, as well as analyzing the outcome data for prescribing patterns and patient outcomes on the back end, will ensure procedures are making a positive difference. In your clinical coordinator role, you will make recommendations and work with expert decision teams to review new formulary medications and utilization of current medications to ensure optimal patient outcomes. You will also need to determine if there are therapeutically equivalent outcomes or opportunities to restrict based on providing more cost-effective use of the medications. You should subscribe and use Listservs, collaborate with your network of clinical coordinators, and read available literature. Coming up with ideas for cost savings based on improving patient outcomes might seem difficult at first. If you begin with a report of the highest in dollars and highest in volume, you can start at the top and brainstorm opportunities. Ideas could include alternative medications, different presentations (a vial and bag rather than a premixed product), restrictions based on indications, or using a generic drug instead of a brand name drug. You should conduct medication-use evaluations (MUEs) on a monthly basis to ensure the policies, guidelines, and restrictions you recommended to the pharmacy and therapeutics (P&T) committee are still in place and followed. You can use students, residents, pharmacy technicians, and pharmacists to help with the MUEs. Keep a list of all the suggested