

Pharmacy Technician

Pharmacy technicians are registered professional members of the pharmacy team who prepare and manage the supply of medicines and give advice to patients and customers.

Case study: Victoria Garrett

HMP Birmingham is a local remand prison which can contain up to 1,450 residents. Until recently it was run by a private company but following concerns from HM Inspector of Prisons, some parts of the prison were closed and the establishment reverted to prison service management on 1 July 2019.

As a remand prison there is a high turnover of residents, which makes managing their medication more complex. Both individuals and medications are RAG rated to make a decision as to whether an individual can manage their own medication and hold it 'in-possession'. This is based on the individual using the NHSE risk assessment template, but also the particular medication and how it could be used in other ways within the prison.

Victoria qualified as a pharmacy technician in 1994. She had been working as a business admin/customer service apprentice in a GP surgery and became interested in the medicine management aspect of the role. When she saw a job as a trainee pharmacy technician at Dudley Hospitals she was inspired, applied and was successful.

After qualifying she had various roles rotating between dispensary, stores, aseptic preparation and on the wards before becoming the dispensary manager in one of the trust's outpatient pharmacies. In 2014 she applied for and became the pharmacy technician dispensary manager at HMP Birmingham and in 2017 became the head of pharmacy at the prison – a responsibility that is usually filled by a pharmacist.

The team has been structured so there is a clinical lead pharmacist who carries out the responsibilities that must be done by a pharmacist but Victoria upwardly line manages the pharmacist to ensure service continuity. She's employed by Birmingham and Solihull Mental



Health NHS Foundation Trust and with the clinical lead pharmacist is part of the senior health care management team within the prison – a role usually restricted to doctors and nurses.

In her role as pharmacy manager, Victoria manages a team comprising of the clinical lead pharmacist, two pharmacists, seven pharmacy technicians and three pharmacy support workers. This includes all the line-management processes; recruitment, supervision and appraisal of staff, as well as developing the service within the prison. This has included:

- Providing training and expanding a risk assessment as to whether individuals can look after their own medication.
- General dispensing and accuracy checking service.
- Repeat medication service.
- Delivering medication out to the wings where there is a 'hatch' (a secure place where medication is administered on the wing).
- Dispensing supervised medication and administering supervised medication, working collaboratively with the nursing teams.
- Working with nursing staff towards providing second checks on controlled drugs.
- Rolling out minor ailment treatments, e.g. cold sores and rashes.
- Pharmacy led clinics for MUR, NMS and hypertension reviews with a pharmacist independent prescriber.
- Auditing missed doses, insulin, and storage of medicines both within the ward and the wings.
- Medicine reconciliation within 72 hours of a resident arriving, where the resident says what medication they are using and this is checked with their GP so that they can quickly receive the medication they were previously taking. HMP Birmingham has just won a Royal College of General Practitioners second place 'Continuity of Care Award' based on this part of their service.
- Developing and delivering the medicines code training for all health care staff within the prison, improving overall medicines management standards.
- Over the last twelve months the pharmacy service has reviewed the 'in possession' medication i.e. which medication is safe for an individual to self-manage. This has led to an increase of residents self-medicating from 26 to almost 70%

The pharmacy provides a stock of general medicines to a secure cupboard in the nursing station in case they are needed over evenings and weekends. Nurses have access to the trust main pharmacy on-call service if this is insufficient. Pharmacy staff, along with nursing staff, are responsible for carrying medicine from the main pharmacy to the hatches on the wings, but this is done through a safe area which is inaccessible to residents. Nevertheless, pharmacy staff never carry medication on their own and all health care staff undergo both the trust and the prison induction, which includes personal safety training.

More recently Victoria has taken up a deputy lead technician role in NHSE Health and Justice Pharmacy Advisory Group and is the deputy chair for the prison medicines management committee (MMC).

Read more about the role:

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pharmacy/roles-pharmacy/pharmacy-technician>



Victoria would recommend to any pharmacy technician to make sure that they get development opportunities and encourage them to go outside their comfort zone in trying new roles, ways of working and places of work.