ASHP’s Management Pearls


The Section of Pharmacy Practice Managers of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) instituted the Management Pearls session at the 2005 Midyear Clinical Meeting. This session is designed to provide a forum for pharmacy managers and leaders to address the continuing needs of the group to develop and share strategies regarding initiatives to improve pharmacy services, to illustrate methods for service improvements, and to share with attendees information about the human resources needed to implement these changes. The short papers compiled in this book represent expanded versions of presentations that were given at the 2007 Management Pearls session in Las Vegas.

The publication presents the proceedings of the meeting in 3 distinct parts. Part 1 consists of 6 papers dealing with development and management of personnel. The articles cover a broad range of topics, including mentoring of staff, career renewal, a “360° performance” tool (a method that incorporates feedback from all stakeholders with whom the employee interacts), and the “makeover” of a pharmacy journal club. A particularly interesting article on “easing a new practitioner into management” provides unique insights into a method that was successful in a multihospital organization in the US Midwest.

Part 2 of the proceedings includes 6 papers on program development, implementation, and management. Two of the papers describe success stories for system-wide approaches, one on standardizing high-risk IV medications and the other on implementing a protocol for venous thromboembolism. Two chapters describe approaches used by 2 institutions to increase success in the documentation of clinical interventions. One paper describes how one organization used a unique “clinical pharmacist communication meeting” to address the need for increased communication among staff regarding the sharing of information about new drugs and procedures.

The final section of the publication, entitled “Financial Management”, comprises 3 papers dedicated to the US system for reimbursement, revenue optimization, and purchasing strategies. Although these 3 papers are an interesting read, they are not particularly germane to Canadian practice.

*ASHP’s Management Pearls* is a succinct and rapid read. As the title implies, the chapters do not address solutions to vexing problems in a comprehensive manner; rather, each offers a single potential solution. Many of the papers are referenced or provide suggested readings if further research into a topic area is necessary. This is a useful reference to have on hand, but not mandatory.

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Financial Management for Health-System Pharmacists


*Financial Management for Health-System Pharmacists* was developed to “provide context, knowledge and specific detailed recommendations for the financial management of a health system pharmacy”. The book appears to be aimed primarily at pharmacists practising in the US health care system who have recently moved into a pharmacy management position or are contemplating a career in health-system pharmacy management.

The 17 chapters in this book provide a comprehensive overview of the finance-related issues with which a pharmacy manager needs to be familiar to effectively manage a pharmacy department. The first few chapters deal with a high-level understanding of financial management within the context of the US health care system. The following half dozen or so chapters drill down into areas such as the budget process in health care, forecasting expenditures, financial management of human resources, analysis of budget variance, and management of pharmaceutical contracts and the supply chain. There is also a chapter on pharmaceutical reimbursement that offers interesting information on the complex reimbursement models that US hospitals have to deal with to obtain payment for the pharmaceutical services that they provide.

In the final section of the book, each chapter has a financial component, but these chapters seem to be written with a broader focus on pharmacy management in mind. The chapter entitled “Strategic Financial Planning” could easily have had the title...
“Strategic Planning”, since it addresses a broad range of issues that must be considered as part of the planning process. Other chapters deal with benchmarking and productivity analysis, the factors that should be considered when an organization is considering outsourcing some or all pharmacy services, and a range of issues related to pharmacy education and research.

The contextual framework for this book is the US health care system, and for those who practise within that system it will undoubtedly be very useful. For Canadian pharmacy practitioners, the book’s value is less clear. A Canadian pharmacist with a limited understanding of financial management in the Canadian health care system would have difficulty separating out the parts of this book that are relevant to the Canadian context. Conversely, a reader who already has a fairly in-depth understanding of how financial management works in the Canadian health care setting probably would not benefit very much from reading a book like this one. Financial Management for Health-System Pharmacists provides interesting insights into the financial management issues faced by our colleagues in the United States, but unless you are contemplating a move south of the border, it isn’t a text that many Canadian hospital pharmacists will find particularly useful.

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Compounding Sterile Preparations: ASHP’s Video Guide to Chapter <797>


This brief and basic guide to the standards of practice set forth in Chapter <797> of the United States Pharmacopeia — National Formulary (USP–NF) deals specifically with the revision of June 1, 2008. The package consists of a 105-page softcover workbook and companion DVD video. The 60-minute video will run on any DVD player, but if played on a computer, an MPEG-2 decoder is required. The 19 sections or chapters of the video and workbook are completely aligned. The text of the workbook follows the video narrator’s text closely, and each section in the workbook concludes with 3 to 6 self-assessment questions (true/false or multiple choice), with answers provided at the back of the book.


In the video, each of these sections is covered in 3 to 5 minutes. In the workbook, each section spans 3 to 6 pages. Therefore, the amount of detail is limited, and explanations or justifications are sparse. In fact, this workbook and video should be considered more as an organizer or overview of sterile compounding programs, rather than a detailed reference text. In many sections, the reader is advised to complete training programs or to consult USP Chapter <797> or other professional publications.

This workbook and video will be useful for a department or a pharmacist setting up a new IV additive program within an institution. In that situation, the workbook and video can be used to identify and establish a foundation for best practice. Alternatively, several sections could also serve as an introduction to more complete training or recertification programs for aseptic and sterile compounding staff. In that case, particular sections could be used to introduce or remind staff of the requirements and responsibilities associated with sterile compounding. However, this video and workbook are not intended to replace or even demonstrate best practice. More detailed reference texts are required and are available to provide this level of instruction and knowledge.

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