

Reducing Hospital Readmissions through Effective Pharmaceutical Interventions

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Introduction

Hospital readmissions pose a significant challenge to healthcare systems worldwide, burdening both patients and providers with increased costs, disrupted care continuity and poorer health outcomes. A considerable proportion of these readmissions is preventable and often stem from medication-related issues such as poor adherence, adverse drug reactions, or insufficient patient education. Effective pharmaceutical interventions, when integrated strategically into the continuum of care, can play a vital role in addressing these issues. Pharmacists, with their specialized knowledge of drug therapy and patient counseling, are uniquely positioned to prevent avoidable readmissions through targeted support during and after hospital discharge [1].

As healthcare models shift toward value-based care, the role of pharmacists in reducing readmissions has gained greater recognition. Transition of care programs, in which pharmacists conduct medication reconciliation, educate patients on proper medication use and follow up after discharge, have been shown to significantly lower the risk of readmission. These interventions ensure that patients understand their therapy, know how to manage side effects and remain adherent to prescribed regimens. Moreover, when pharmacists collaborate closely with physicians, nurses and case managers, they can contribute to more holistic, patient-centered discharge planning. By bridging the gap between hospital and home, pharmaceutical care becomes a key safeguard against fragmentation and gaps that commonly lead to readmissions [2].

Description

Pharmaceutical interventions are increasingly recognized as pivotal tools in reducing preventable hospital readmissions. One of the most critical components is comprehensive medication reconciliation during transitions of care, particularly at discharge. Pharmacists identify and resolve discrepancies between inpatient and outpatient medication regimens, such as omitted drugs, duplications, or incorrect dosages. These errors can result in serious complications or unnecessary readmissions if left uncorrected. Pharmacists also ensure that patients are discharged with clear, accurate instructions regarding all medications. This process not only enhances patient safety but also improves communication between hospital, primary care providers and patients themselves. In high-risk populations such as elderly patients or those with chronic conditions, medication reconciliation plays a protective role, ensuring consistency and clarity across care settings. By proactively managing pharmacotherapy at the point of transition, pharmacists help prevent therapeutic failures and reduce the likelihood of returning to the hospital [3].

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Received: 03 May, 2025, Manuscript No. pbt-25-167742; **Editor Assigned:** 05 May, 2025, PreQC No. P-167742; **Reviewed:** 19 May, 2025, QC No. Q-167742; **Revised:** 24 May, 2025, Manuscript No. R-167742; **Published:** 31 May, 2025, DOI: 10.37421/2167-7689.2025.14.483

Patient education and counseling by pharmacists are another critical element in minimizing readmissions. Many hospital readmissions result not from treatment failure but from improper medication use, lack of adherence, or misunderstanding of instructions. Pharmacists can address these issues by explaining how and when to take medications, what side effects to monitor and when to seek help. Simplifying complex regimens, using adherence aids like blister packs or pill organizers and providing multilingual support materials can further empower patients. Post-discharge follow-up calls or clinic visits led by pharmacists help reinforce education, identify barriers to adherence and correct problems early. These personal interactions enhance patients' confidence in managing their own care, which significantly lowers their risk of returning to the hospital. Studies have shown that structured pharmacist-led counseling is associated with improved adherence and reduced 30-day readmission rates, particularly in conditions like heart failure, COPD and diabetes [4].

Beyond individual patient-level interventions, pharmacists play a key role in system-wide efforts to reduce readmissions. Medication Therapy Management (MTM) programs offer structured frameworks for evaluating a patient's entire medication regimen, identifying risks and optimizing therapy. These programs are particularly valuable for complex or vulnerable populations with multiple comorbidities and medications. When embedded in primary care or hospital discharge planning teams, pharmacists can assess therapeutic effectiveness, reduce duplicative or unnecessary medications and collaborate with prescribers to adjust therapies as needed. Integration of pharmacists into transitional care teams also ensures follow-up coordination, timely refills and access to community pharmacy services. From a public health and policy perspective, pharmacist-driven interventions support healthcare cost containment by preventing adverse events and decreasing emergency department utilization. Furthermore, incorporating pharmacists into readmission reduction strategies supports the shift toward value-based care, where providers are incentivized based on outcomes rather than volume. Their unique expertise in medication management is an underutilized asset that, when fully integrated, can dramatically improve care continuity and patient outcomes post-hospitalization [5].

Conclusion

Effective pharmaceutical interventions are critical in reducing preventable hospital readmissions and ensuring smoother transitions of care. Pharmacists play a pivotal role through medication reconciliation, patient counseling and post-discharge monitoring, all of which contribute to safer and more coordinated care. As healthcare systems continue to emphasize quality and outcomes, leveraging the full potential of pharmaceutical care becomes increasingly essential. By actively engaging patients and collaborating with other healthcare professionals, pharmacists can close critical gaps in the discharge process and create lasting impacts on patient health. Reducing readmissions through pharmaceutical intervention is not only a cost-saving strategy it is a commitment to patient-centered, preventive care.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest by author.

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How to cite this article: Hollier, Alomar. "Reducing Hospital Readmissions through Effective Pharmaceutical Interventions." *Pharmaceut Reg Affairs* 14 (2025): 483.