

ECU Pre-Pharmacy Club
Meeting with Leigh Cobb, CPhT
April 7, 2009
MINUTES

Ms. Cobb has been a technician for 19 years, and a CPhT for 11 years. She learned everything she needed to know to pass the certification test while working as a technician for 8 years. To become certified, you take a national exam; to stay certified, you have to get 20 hours of continuing education every two years. All of this CE can be done online and is often paid for by your employer. CE can include topics like current treatments and drug development as well as issues related to Medicare Part D, etc.

Certified Pharmacy Technicians may perform the following tasks:

- Transfer prescriptions
- Oversee inventory
- Prepare and send invoices
- Develop pricing plans
- Communicate with doctors and nurses

ECU Pharmacy Services has four locations and supports 20-30 ECU clinics.

Ms. Cobb works in the pharmacy at the James D. Bernstein Community Health Center. This center is supported through federal grants and is required to have a partner pharmacy through which 340B pricing (a discount drug program) can be made available. Indigent patients, from as far west as Wilson to as far east as the coast, are treated at the health center. There is a full time physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, and a part-time physician on staff.

It is complicated for a pharmacy to qualify for 340B pricing. Two separate inventories must be maintained: one inventory purchased at traditional prices and dispensed to insured patients (or patients who can afford full-priced drugs), and one inventory purchased at deep discount and dispensed to indigent patients.

Ms. Cobb directs the Medication Assistance Program. Drug companies must provide no-cost drugs to patients who prove they cannot afford full-priced drugs. Ms. Cobb helps over 400 patients receive free prescription medication every month. She is able to build up an emergency stock of common drugs to be able to dispense to patients in immediate need. This program helps keep patients out of the emergency department and in the health center getting needed regular care. Other agencies such as the Salvation Army and the Laughing House help uninsured patients pay for their prescriptions. It is important for her and her coworkers to be sympathetic to patient needs while still expecting patients to be responsible for their own health. For instance, it is difficult for Ms. Cobb to see a patient claim he cannot afford a \$5 inhaler when he might have two \$6 packs of cigarettes in his pocket. She must find a way to both help that patient get the inhaler and talk to him about his priorities.

Ms. Cobb said ECU Pharmacy Services is looking for serious and committed volunteers available to work at least 3 hours per visit. Students will be trained, must take a HIPAA quiz, and must be able to deal with sensitive patient information to protect patient rights. Volunteer opportunities are in the chemotherapy pharmacy, retail pharmacies, and in the health center pharmacy. Dr. Danell has forms for potential volunteers to fill out, or you can contact Ms. Cobb.

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