

# Our dedication to the mental health care system

Jehan Marino, PharmD, BCPP

College of Pharmacy  
Nova Southeastern University  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

## KEYWORDS

psychiatry, pharmacist, contributions, patient care

On a national and international level, psychiatric pharmacists are making contributions to the care of patients with mental health disorders in regards to how to manage their medications and improve their quality of life. By working in collaboration with other health care professionals including nurses, physicians, and students in training, psychiatric pharmacists have positively impacted patients in many ways and in a variety of practice settings.<sup>1-5</sup> Educating patients has become a vital role for psychiatric pharmacists. This patient counseling can include explaining how the medications work, the importance of adherence, and potential adverse effects. Rickels et al reported pharmacists' telemonitoring of patient's antidepressants helped improve their knowledge of medication and also increased compliance in a community setting.<sup>1</sup> Another study reported pharmacists and physicians collaborating in a French prison to reduce the use of high dosages of benzodiazepine in prison patients.<sup>2</sup> The authors concluded the collaboration among pharmacists and physicians had a positive impact on improving prescribing patterns in a prison environment. These types of collaborations among pharmacists and physicians should be continued to promote improved prescribing practices and the development of treatment guidelines for patient care in the prison system.

Additionally, psychiatric pharmacists are involved in hospital settings, providing clinical interventions, drug information, and patient education/counseling.<sup>3,6-8</sup> The impact of psychiatric pharmacists in the hospital setting has been shown to improve patient outcomes by decreasing symptom rating scales, decreasing adverse events through proper monitoring, and ultimately, reducing hospital costs.<sup>3,8</sup> One study reported faculty pharmacists, hospital staff pharmacists, and student pharmacists' interventions including clarifications of orders, obtaining medication histories, recommending doses or dose adjustments, and providing patient counseling and education resulted in cost savings in a psychiatric hospital.<sup>3</sup> Another study in an inpatient psychiatric hospital demonstrated that psychiatric pharmacists helped significantly improve outcomes in patients with thought disorders and mood disorders versus control patients receiving no intervention (i.e., counseling, monitoring, treatment recommendations).<sup>8</sup> Additionally,

adverse events and hospital costs were decreased in patients in the care of a psychiatric pharmacist.

Overall, psychiatric pharmacists are heavily involved in caring for patients with mental illness by educating caregivers and patients about medications, monitoring and recommending appropriate treatments, and working to reduce the incidence of adverse events and hospital costs. They participate in varied clinical practice settings including inpatient, community, and prison centers. Additionally they collaborate effectively with other health care professionals to improve prescribing practices and patient outcomes, as well as develop treatment guidelines, which have a major impact in improving patients' symptoms and thereby improving their quality of life.

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