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Medication Safety during COVID 19

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and the response of the healthcare system has affected the ability of healthcare to ensure medication safety in several ways. These include challenges associated with medication shortages, changes to the pharmacy workflow, an ever-changing evidence base associated with the pharmaceutical treatment of COVID-19 complications, and limited availability of personal protective equipment (PPE). Pharmacists are the best-positioned professionals to ensure safety through the preparation, delivery, and ongoing management of medications. However, like the majority of healthcare providers, the usual pharmacy workflow and operations have been greatly impacted by the response to COVID-19 have modified the physical settings of care for pharmacists, necessitating changes to their workflows. Additionally, pharmacist workflows may be interrupted or require modification due to increased informatics and technology changes associated with monitoring medication supplies or when systems are operating with a decreased workforce (colleagues are forced to work from home, are sick, or may be furloughed). Lastly, redeployment of healthcare personnel to new areas and specialty of care may introduce safety risks due to unfamiliarity with workflows and processes. For example, the Institute for Safe Medication Practices recently shared a case study in which there was a failure to engage barcode medication administration, a best practice in medication safety, when healthcare staff was assigned to a new patient care area. Also the recommendation of using automation during COVID-19.

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