



Health Career Directory

Pharmacy Assistant

Overview

Pharmacy Assistants assist with drug dispensing by measuring, compounding, packaging and distributing medications. Pharmacy assistants maintain stock levels and perform clerical functions. Pharmacy Assistants work under the general supervision of the Coordinator, of Pharmacy Services, a Pharmacy Technician Supervisor or Pharmacist. Pharmacy assistants cannot work as a Pharmacy Technician unless they have completed upgrading courses and are eligible for registration with the College of Pharmacists of BC.

A Pharmacy Assistant's duties and responsibilities vary depending on where they work (in a hospital or community pharmacy). Some of the main duties of a Pharmacy Assistant are to:

- gather and enter patient information and doctors' prescriptions in computer systems
- assess prescriptions for completeness
- prepare, package and prescription medications after a pharmacist has decided on the appropriateness of therapy
- compound non-sterile pharmaceutical products
- maintain prescription and inventory record keeping systems
- maintain proper drug storage and security
- place and receive orders for stock to maintain inventory.

Other responsibilities depend on the setting. For example, in community pharmacies Pharmacy Assistants may:

- help customers find non-prescription items
- provide patients with non-drug product information
- accept payment for prescriptions
- prepare and settle third party insurance claims and records
- participate in health promotion (for example, disease management screening and consultation clinics)
- price, stock and mark items for sale.

In hospital settings they may:

- prepare sterile products such as intravenous (IV) admixtures, chemotherapy admixtures and total parenteral nutrition (TPN)
- restock drugs and solutions kept on nursing wards
- restock drug kits that are kept for specific types of emergencies (for example, anaphylactic or diabetic shock)
- fill dose carts and deliver them to nursing stations
- manage the use of automated compounding and dispensing devices

- collect and document information.

Who is suited to become a pharmacist assistant?

Pharmacy Assistants must be able to perform routine tasks while maintaining a high degree of concentration and attention. Pharmacy Assistants are most effective when they have the following skills and characteristics:

- good attention to detail with high degree of accuracy
- excellent oral and written communication skills
- good math skills
- good problem solving and decision making skills
- a caring attitude toward others
- good manual dexterity
- the ability to remain calm and handle emergencies
- the ability to pay close attention to detail
- a willingness to keep up to date with new products and practices.

They should enjoy having clear rules and organized methods for their work, putting together information and using computers.

Who employs this professional?

In BC Pharmacy Assistants are employed by health authorities/employers. Most of them are employed in community pharmacies, hospitals or medical centre pharmacies. Some are employed by health insurance companies, third party billing centres or related organizations: such as pharmaceutical companies, drug wholesalers and pharmacy supply companies.

Pharmacy Assistants may need to work shifts including evenings, weekends and holidays.

Sometimes they work under stressful conditions. The work is demanding because it requires both accuracy and efficiency to ensure patient safety. In other words, there is no room for mistakes. Pharmacy Assistants are on their feet for most of their shift. They may need to lift and move objects.

Salary

\$22.34 per hour