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# CONTRIBUTION OF CLINICAL PHARMACIST TO SAFE AND EFFECTIVE MEDICATION USE IN HOSPITALS

**Tarunjot Singh Bhatia[1], Armaan[1], Tanish Bhatnagar[1], Navneet Sharma[1], Daljeet Masih[1]***

[1]University Institute of Pharma Science, Chandigarh University, Mohali, Punjab, India

## ABSTRACT

Clinical pharmacists are vital healthcare professionals who specialize in optimizing medication therapy to improve patient outcomes. With advanced training in pharmacotherapy, they collaborate closely with physicians, nurses, and other healthcare providers to ensure drug therapies are safe, effective, and economically viable. Their role emphasizes personalized patient care through thorough assessment of medication regimens based on safety, efficacy, cost, and appropriateness. By proactively identifying and preventing adverse drug reactions and medication errors, clinical pharmacists contribute significantly to enhancing treatment adherence and disease management. Within hospital settings, clinical pharmacists perform a multitude of critical functions. They participate in ward rounds, review medication histories, and provide counseling on drug use, side effects, and lifestyle modifications. Their responsibilities also include monitoring for drug-drug interactions and contraindications, recommending or adjusting therapies, and ensuring precise drug selection and dosing. In certain settings, under collaborative agreements with physicians, they may order diagnostic tests, manage complex regimens, and even write prescriptions. Furthermore, clinical pharmacists play an essential role in patient education, bridging communication between patients and healthcare teams, thereby fostering better understanding and adherence. They are instrumental in reducing healthcare costs through the promotion of cost-effective therapies and the prevention of drug-related complications. Additionally, they support healthcare institutions by providing drug information, aiding in therapeutic decisions, and engaging in clinical research to advance pharmaceutical care. Overall, clinical pharmacists are indispensable in delivering comprehensive, safe, and cost-conscious healthcare solutions tailored to individual patient needs.

**Keywords:** Clinical pharmacy, Pharmacotherapy, Medication safety, Patient adherence, Cost-effective therapy, Healthcare collaboration

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## INTRODUCTION

Clinical pharmacists are healthcare providers who try to deliver personalized patient care focusing on optimizing medication for better health outcomes. They demonstrate their advanced education and training in pharmacotherapy through collaboration with physicians, nurses, and other health professionals to ensure drug therapies that are safe, effective, and cost- efficient. Therapeutic application of drugs defines the clinical pharmacist. They assess all aspects of the drug therapies performed by a patient in terms of cost and safety. Also, efficacy and appropriateness are considered to be assistive in the prevention of adverse drug reactions and medication errors [1].

Clinical pharmacists traditionally manage medication therapy, hence expected to improve disease conditions, treatment adherence, and patient health. They serve as key links between patients and physicians regarding drug use, thereby promoting clearer communication and understanding and improving patient outcomes in education and adherence. Cost-saving lifestyles concerning healthcare are achieved through cost-effective therapy and prevention of complication due to medicines [2-3].

Clinical pharmacists perform a variety of roles in hospitals, including participating in ward rounds and counselling patients on the various aspects of health. Reviewing medication histories and making therapeutic recommendations to the doctors, selecting, calculating, and sustaining the correct drugs, keeping a lookout for drug-drug interactions, adverse effects and contraindications; modifying treatment as necessary. Taking a major role in informing patients about their medications, how to use it, possible side effects, appropriate lifestyle changes to adhere to safety requirements. One of the typical functions in this hospital is the actual functioning of clinical pharmacists: they manage complex drug regimens, order blood tests, and may write prescriptions under formal agreements with doctors but ensure appropriate patient preparation, storage, and administration of drugs, reconcile medications, and provide notices for patients who have particular needs or use high-risk medications, give medication information to health institutions, develop therapeutic recommendations, and conduct clinical research [4-5].

To optimize medication for better health outcomes, clinical pharmacists are health care professionals who strive to achieve individualized patient care. Their advanced education and training in pharmacotherapy enable collaborative efforts with physicians, nurses, and colleagues in health care to ensure safe, effective, and cost-efficient drug therapies [6].

### 1.1 Clinical Pharmacy

It is quite clear that the emergence of clinical pharmacy in any hospital has been with the special concern towards the improvement of the medication use and patient safety. The growing complexity of drug therapy and the increased need for medication safety measures have been highlighted by the

WHO and other health agencies around the world, and it has become even more imperative for clinical pharmacists now-a-days with their evolving role from dispensing- exclusivity to active participation in patient care. They have therefore defined that clinical pharmacy is a major player in these safety initiatives [7].

A research study conducted by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) found that hospitals without clinical pharmacists registered more than a 40% incidence of medication errors. Further, pharmacists serve a critical role in patient counselling, which helps healthcare outcomes by enhancing adherence rates [8].

### 1.1.1 Historical Evolution of Clinical Pharmacy

In the mid-20th century, clinical pharmacy first appeared as a field of specialization as the role of the pharmacist transformed from dispensing medications to incorporating a component of dialogue with patient care. The momentous change began in the mid1960s from the United States of America, which allowed pharmacists to directly provide medication therapy recommendations. They began rendering special therapeutic services by this time mainly as a consequence of complexity in chronic diseases and drug therapies, as well as the necessity for minimizing adverse events connected with medication or drug therapy.

By the 1970s and 1980s, clinical pharmacy programs became permanently integrated into the healthcare systems of North America and Europe, paving the way for pharmacist-led interventions in hospitals. In 1990s, international health organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) began to identify clinical pharmacists as indispensable health providers, and thus, worldwide clinical pharmacy services were introduced in hospitals on a global scale [9-10].

**Historical Evolution of Clinical Pharmacy in India**

Over the last few decades, clinical pharmacy in India has undergone tremendous change due to regulatory improvements, curriculum changes, and an increased emphasis on patient- centric care.

**Pre-1990s: Traditional Pharmacy Practice**

Thus, it was primarily dispensing and retail pharmacy services that characterized Indian pharmacy practice. The professional input was more into inventory management and supply chain operations than anything to do with direct patient-care. Curriculum-wise, it was concerned with applied pharmaceutical sciences to the exclusion of clinical applications.

Pharmacy practice in India before the 1990s denoted a narrow scope of areas with an associated focus on almost entirely hospital supply chain management, retail pharmacy services and distribution of drugs. This was reflected in the professional jobs and educational programs.

In the 1990s, the main work carried out by the pharmacist was the preparation, combination, and

dispensing of medicines according to prescriptions written by the physician. Interaction between the public and pharmacists usually takes place in retail pharmacy zones where the pharmacist, as a general practitioner, acts as dispenser and not as clinical specialist or healthcare counsellor.

Buying, distribution, and inventory management of medications were the primary functions of hospital pharmacists in an environment of hospitals. Instead of directly caring for patients or making treatment decisions, they mostly performed administrative duties, making sure that medications were available and stored properly [11].

***1990s-2000s: Introduction of Clinical Pharmacy Concepts***

There was an establishment of the concept of clinical pharmacy which actively focused upon the role of the pharmacist in maximizing the benefits of pharmaceutical therapy towards improved quality of life. For instance, with Hepler and Strand introducing 'pharmaceutical care' in 1990 to mean that the pharmacist was a member of the medical team responsible for the patient-oriented management of drug therapy of patients-this concept was getting its ground in India. This was the time when the Pharmacy Council of India (PCI) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) began to revise pharmacy education to give place to clinical pharmacy, conditionally accepting the preparation of future pharmacists for clinical roles [12]. In 1984, the first postgraduate course in Hospital and Clinical Pharmacy came to be effectively initiated at the Delhi College of Pharmacy with Dr. B.D. Miglani, the father of Indian hospital pharmacy. This was the first big step toward formal clinical pharmacy education in India [13].

2008: Introduction of Pharm.D Program

This newly started Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D) program by the Pharmacy Council of India (PCI) in early 2008 has literally revolutionized the clinical pharmacy practice in India. Till now, pharmacists in India were largely confined into boundaries that included manufacturing, dispensing, and little or no patient interaction ignoring any kind of direct patient-related care or therapeutic decision-making in such cases. The six years Pharm.D program specifically designed to fill the gap was meant to arm pharmacists with advanced clinical knowledge, medication therapy management skills, and the ability to function as integral members of an interdisciplinary healthcare team [14]. The Pharm.D program curriculum is quite comprehensive and patient-centered, dealing with topics like clinical pharmacy, pharmacotherapeutics, clinical pharmacokinetics, hospital and community pharmacy, clinical research, pharmaco-economics, and a compulsory one-year internship in a hospital setting. This ensured that graduates are industrially equipped not only in appropriate science regarding medicines but also in the art of patient care such as interviewing regarding medication history, monitoring of adverse drug reactions, patient counselling, and therapeutic drug monitoring.

The implementation of this Pharm.D program resulted in establishing and expanding clinical pharmacy services in teaching hospitals throughout the country. Fourth and final-year Pharm.D students and graduates began actively contributing to hospital clinical pharmacy services [15-19].

2010s: Expansion and Recognition of Clinical Pharmacy Services

The increased recognition given to clinical pharmacists in enhancing patient outcomes by hospitals of India is of prime importance. Their involvement in medical teams has significantly enhanced medication safety, diminished adverse drug reactions, and improved treatment outcomes for patients, particularly in critical care areas. Pharmacovigilance programs and adverse drug reaction monitoring centers have been spread across the country, allowing the clinical pharmacist to help identify, report, and analyses adverse drug reactions. All of these play an important role in promoting patient safety and rational medication use.

Antimicrobial stewardship programs (AMSPs) work closely with clinical pharmacy interventions. Clinical pharmacists review antibiotic orders, assess therapeutic outcomes, and provide ongoing education to other health care providers regarding rational drug use. Such interventions optimize antibiotic therapy, minimize selection pressure for antimicrobial resistance, and encourage rational use of drugs. All these changes represent a giant leap forward for pharmacy practice and place clinical pharmacists among the key stakeholders in quality health care and patient-centered medication management in India.

2020s-Present: Fortifying Clinical Pharmacists' Role

The COVID-19 pandemic showed the paramount importance of clinical pharmacists in drug therapy management of very ill patients. Since then, their expertise in medication selection, drug dosing, monitoring for drug interactions, and adverse effect prevention has become paramount in therapy optimization and patient safety during an unprecedented healthcare challenge. Clinical pharmacists became instrumental in antimicrobial stewardship, medication reconciliation, and providing communication and medication use recommendations to physicians through evidence-based means in the COVID-19 care settings.

With these benefits affirmed, government policies and healthcare institutions are now backing these initiatives with strong emphasis, which correlate pharmacy services to medication safety, chronic disease management, and tele pharmacy. Tele pharmacy and remote medication management clinics have empowered pharmacists to extend their services to provide continuity of care and better clinical outcomes for chronic disease patients, even during lockdowns and healthcare disruptions [20-24].

## 2. Role Of Clinical Pharmacist in Patient Safety

When patients move from one healthcare setting to another—be it the hospital admission, interdepartmental transfer, or discharge—medication reconciliation becomes an essential

component of patient care. Such transitions are often muddled with confusion or miscommunication on which medications the patient should or should not be taking. This is where medication reconciliation comes in—to obtain the correct and complete medication list of all medications being taken by the patient. This views the entire matter holistically with regard to prescribed and OTC medications, herbal supplements, and vitamins. After compiling the medication list, the healthcare providers will be comparing it with the new medications prescribed during the transition to identify and resolve discrepancies in potential dose miscalculations, omissions, and possible drug interactions. In the long run, this reduces the risk of common medication errors that may result during transitions of care with dire consequences. More than a checklist, medication reconciliation brings together physicians and nurses, pharmacists, and quite frequently the very patients being treated. It is about ensuring that the whole team comes together in the name of safer treatment decisions and better health outcomes. In effect, it guarantees that the right medication is given to the patient at the right dose at the right time, which is at the heart of quality and patient-centered care [25-30].

**2.1. Monitoring Drug Interactions: Drug interactions and the relevant possible side effects are identified and studied:**

Clinical pharmacists are extremely important in determining whether a patient's medication therapy is safe and effective. One of their major responsibilities is monitoring for possible drug interactions, in which one drug may enhance or diminish the effect of another drug, perhaps to the detriment of the patient. As an ever-increasing number of patients are treated with a multitude of drugs, especially in chronic disease settings or complicated treatment regimens, the number of possibilities becomes overwhelming. Clinical pharmacists consider more than just prescribed drugs; they will also consider OTC medications, herbal remedies, and supplements which might or might not interfere with these prescriptions.

They scrutinize the medication list to identify possible conflicts using clinical judgment, expert databases, and clinical tools that assess the respective risk. Clinical pharmacists work very proactively with physicians and nursing staff to agree upon alternative therapies, ensuring patient safety and proper treatment, whenever such an interaction is suspected. Recommendations might encompass alternative dosing, switching to another drug, or correctly timing two agents together to minimize risk. They will then forge ahead with intensive patient education, using lay terminology to discuss the interaction, symptoms to monitor, and easy ways to manage the therapeutic regimen**.** Through this, they not only work in preventing dangerous adverse reactions but also try to ensure that each drug is working for the patient's wellbeing. In their way, this vigilance and knowledge provide an extra layer of security within the health-care system, making sure that treatment is much

safer and beneficial to all [30-33].

**2.2. Patient education:**

The concept of adherence to medication according to clinical pharmacists should be well introduced and understood by the patients and their care givers which will enable it for treatment and therapy success in the future. Role of a clinical pharmacist is termed as critical and dynamic regarding patient education, which goes far beyond just dispensing medications to patients. It makes the patients aware of their treatment and feels confident in empowering themselves in managing their health. One of the main tasks of a clinical pharmacist is to provide patients with the understanding of medications they will be taking. It includes explaining to them what they are prescribed and when and how to take them along with any potential adverse effects that might occur because of the intake of certain medications. By addressing these things with the patients, clinical pharmacists help prevent potential misunderstandings that would lead to either incorrect use of medications or missed doses because they did not give the counsellor or patient specific information [34-39].

**2.3. Preventing Medication Errors:**

The continuous and active reviewing of prescriptions by the clinical pharmacists expand their role in a hospital setting for accuracy and safety of all the patients be it a patient who has occupied the bed or be it an outpatient dispensing, their job remains optimized more towards preventing any sort of medication error that is to stick to a prescription.

Clinical pharmacists in the hospital are an inseparable component in medication error prevention, that is, safeguarding the patients from erroneous medication use all through their entire care process. From the onset of writing the prescription, the clinical pharmacist reviews every medication order in detail to ascertain that the drugs prescribed are in fact good choices for the particular condition of the patient. The clinical pharmacist checks all the possible interactions, allergies, or contraindications that could endanger the patient's health. This keen eye for detail assures that the patients receive medicines that are safe and effective with respect to their unique health requirements [40-44].

**2.4. Medication Management and Error Prevention:**

The major way through which pharmacists deal with medication management and error prevention is during serious transitions such as hospital admission or discharge and or transfer. They participate in a technique known as medication reconciliation, whereby they specifically look at and compare a patient's medication lists with newly prescribed medications in order to identify, correct, and resolve any discrepancies including omission, duplication, and the possibility of drug interaction. That guarantees the patient is placed on uninterrupted continued therapy on medications that may be severely consequential in health condition.

Apart from that, clinical pharmacists also do a thorough review of prescriptions. Each would look into every prescribed medication for its accuracy, including finding wrong doses indicated, contraindications, or potential drug allergies. They thus become a safety net for the failures that would have been made in a busy outpatient environment [45-49].

**2.5. ADR Prevention and Monitoring:**

Involved Clinical pharmacists are central actors in the prevention and monitoring of adverse drug reactions ensuring safety of patients during therapy periods. Their responsibilities include reporting of such reactions as these are the most identifiable, first responsibilities to ADR. Thanks to the close contact with patients and health care teams, clinical pharmacists are most probably the first to experience unexpected symptoms or changes within a given patient's condition indicative of ADRs. They document these for pharmacovigilance centers where the latter can broaden knowledge of the medication safety as well as empower treatment protocol for future patients. This after all does not only improve the outcomes for individual patients but makes the entire safety culture stronger in its institutions related to health care [50-53].

**2.6. Drug Interaction Prevention:**

Clinical pharmacists indeed have a big role in preventing drug interactions and providing patients with safe and effective therapy. The clinical pharmacist reviews the medication regimen of each patient in the context of drug-drug interactions. They actively consult doctors to replace one drug for another, bring about dose adjustment, or change the time of administration of a higher dose of therapeutic drug to avoid the interaction. This input becomes all the more vital in patients with more than one comorbidity and are hence at a greater risk for interactions.

Food-drug interactions have also seen a great difference in presence and accordingly contribution to clinical pharmacists. These professionals will educate both patients and health care personnel about foods that may interfere with the effectiveness or safety of the medication. For instance, they may advise patients on statins to avoid grapefruit, as this fruit can alter metabolism of the drug and increase its side effects. Such proactive counselling empowers patients to make responsible choices and to avert any accidental complications [54-59].

**2.7. Ward Round Participation:**

When attending hospital ward rounds, clinical pharmacists become important active participants in the team responsible for patient care. Their place during the rounds enables them to interact directly with doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, bringing their specialized knowledge on medications relevant to the occasion. The clinical pharmacist, in very close observation with each patient, carefully assesses the current medications being used and makes corrections if necessary, concerning the patient's condition, age, kidney and liver function, and overall health status. The

clinical pharmacist can immediately raise concerns regarding any possible problem, such as drug interaction, an error in dose, or a medication that probably does not require usage anymore, and offer alternative options to avoid such a risk or search for a more effective solution [60].

## CONCLUSION

The contribution of clinical pharmacists to safe and effective medication use in hospitals is both significant and multifaceted. Clinical pharmacists play a pivotal role in enhancing patient outcomes through comprehensive medication management, prevention of adverse drug reactions, reduction of medication errors, and improved therapeutic efficacy across a wide range of clinical settings. Their involvement in interdisciplinary healthcare teams ensures that pharmacological therapies are optimized, evidence-based, and tailored to individual patient needs. Numerous studies and systematic reviews confirm that clinical pharmacy services contribute to lower hospital readmission rates, better chronic disease management, and increased patient satisfaction. As healthcare systems face increasing complexity, the integration of clinical pharmacists into hospital care is not only beneficial but essential for ensuring the highest standards of patient safety and therapeutic success. Continued investment in clinical pharmacy services, education, and research will further strengthen their role in advancing hospital-based healthcare delivery.

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***Corresponding Author: Dr. Daljeet Masih, University Institute of Pharma Sciences, Chandigarh University, Gharuan, Mohali, Punjab, India**