



Scope of Practice for Clinical Pharmacists

American College of Clinical Pharmacy

Professional Practice

Clinical pharmacists are licensed professionals with advanced education and training who practice in all types of patient care settings. They participate as members of the health care team to provide high-quality, coordinated, patient-centered care to ensure that individuals and populations achieve the best possible outcomes from their medications. Clinical pharmacists assess medication-related needs, evaluate medication therapy, develop and implement plans of care, and provide follow-up evaluation and medication monitoring in collaboration with other members of the health care team. In the course of this practice, clinical pharmacists interpret diagnostic and laboratory tests, identify the most appropriate drug and nondrug therapies, and teach patients and caregivers about medications and how to use them. They also serve as health care researchers, university and college faculty, medication information specialists, organizational leaders, consultants, and authors of books and articles on pharmacology and medication therapy.

Education

Today's clinical pharmacists complete 6–8 years of undergraduate and professional education leading to the doctor of pharmacy (Pharm.D.) degree, including 2–3 years of coursework that emphasizes pharmacology and the clinical assessment, monitoring, and treatment of disease; and 1–2 years in supervised, direct patient care settings, where, as members of the health care team, they engage in the assessment, treatment, monitoring, and teaching of patients. They also complete 1–2 years of accredited postgraduate residency training as licensed clinical practitioners, where they work in team-based settings under the guidance of expert practitioners in clinical pharmacy and other health disciplines. Clinical pharmacists achieve board certification in their area(s) of specialization and maintain competence through recertification, mandatory continuing education, and self-directed continuous professional development.

Accountability

As accountable members of the health care team, clinical pharmacists establish and maintain written collaborative practice agreements with individual physicians, medical groups, or health systems and/or practice under formally granted clinical privileges from the medical staff or credentialing system of the organization in which they practice. These agreements, together with state pharmacy practice acts, confer specific authorities, responsibilities, and accountabilities to the clinical pharmacist. Clinical pharmacists are committed to promoting quality care that improves patients' health outcomes. This is accomplished by leading and participating in health care organizations, conducting research, disseminating research findings, and applying these findings to clinical practice.

Responsibility

Clinical pharmacists have a covenantal, "fiducial" relationship with their patients. This relationship relies on the trust placed in the clinical pharmacist by the patient and the commitment of the clinical pharmacist to act in the best interests of individual patients and patient populations. Clinical pharmacists exhibit the traits of professionalism: responsibility, commitment to excellence, respect for others, honesty and integrity, and care and compassion. They subscribe to the pharmacy profession's code of ethics and adhere to all pharmacist-related legal and ethical standards. Clinical pharmacists also assume responsibility for advancing their discipline through involvement in professional societies and participation in health policy at local, state, national, and international levels.