



A CAREER IN PHARMACY – PHARMACY TECHNICIANS

What is a pharmacy technician, and where do they work?

Pharmacy technicians assist and support licensed pharmacists in providing health care and medications to patients. Pharmacy technicians must have a broad knowledge of pharmacy practice, and be skilled in the techniques required to order, stock, package, perform aseptic technique and prepare medications, but they do not need the advance college education required of a licensed pharmacist. At **Ministry Health Care**, we have three levels of Pharmacy Technicians. Pharmacy technician is the entry-level position focused on stocking, dispensing and customer service. Pharmacy Technician II is a position that requires advanced critical thinking, prioritization, and mastering of aseptic technique to prepare sterile compounded products. Our third position, technician supervisor, is a certified pharmacy technician who oversees daily technician operations.

Pharmacy technicians may perform many of the same duties as pharmacists; *however*, a pharmacist must check all of a technician's work before medication can be dispensed to a patient. Ministry pharmacy technicians work in hospital pharmacies, retail pharmacies, and home infusion pharmacies.

What are the duties of a pharmacy technician?

In retail pharmacy, technicians may stock and inventory prescription and over the counter medications, maintain written or computerized patient medications records, count or pour medications into dispensing containers, type prescription labels, prepare insurance claim forms, and manage the cash register. In hospitals, pharmacy technicians may perform many of the same duties as they do in retail pharmacy, but they have additional responsibilities including assembling a 24 hour supply of medication for each patient, repackaging medications, preparing commercially unavailable medications, preparing sterile intravenous medication, maintaining automated dispensing cabinets located on patient floors, delivering medications to nursing units, and also operating computerized dispensing and/or robotic machinery. In most practice settings, pharmacy technicians perform any duties they are assigned by the pharmacist. *The one requirement all these pharmacy technicians duties have in common, is a need for absolute accuracy and precision in both the technical and clerical aspects of the job.*

What personal qualities should a pharmacy technician have?

Although pharmacy technicians work under the supervision of a licensed pharmacist, and must be willing to take directions, they must also be able to work competently without constant

instruction by the pharmacist. In any pharmacy setting the patient is the most important person. Pharmacy technicians must truly care about, and find satisfaction in serving, the patient. Because of the critical nature of many common pharmacy duties, the pharmacy technician must enjoy performing precise work. Pharmacy technicians must be able to maintain accuracy in stressful or emergency situations. It also requires good manual dexterity, good communication and interpersonal skills are essential for pharmacy technicians who must interact with pharmacy co-workers, patients, and other health care professionals on a daily basis.

What kinds of education, training, or certification are available or required for pharmacy technicians?

Currently, there are no federal or Wisconsin state requirements for formal education or training of pharmacy technicians. Informal, “on the job” training is still the most common training for pharmacy technicians. Ministry recognizes graduates from formal pharmacy technician programs and/or pharmacy technician certification. Currently, in Wisconsin there are three technical schools offering a pharmacy technician diploma program

What work hours and wages should a pharmacy technician expect?

Pharmacy technicians work the same hours and schedules as pharmacists. In retail and hospital pharmacies, pharmacy technicians should expect to work weekdays and some weekends. A number of our Ministry hospitals operate 24 hours a day and require 24 hour pharmacy services.

There is a broad range of starting salaries for pharmacy technicians, depending on the type and location of the pharmacy where they are employed.

What is the employment outlook, and are there opportunities for advancement as a pharmacy technician?

The increasing clinical emphasis of pharmacists’ responsibilities makes the employment outlook for well-trained pharmacy technicians very good. Currently, pharmacy technicians are assuming more responsibility for routine tasks, previously performed by pharmacists, and will be responsible for mastering new pharmacy technology as it becomes available.