

HOSPITAL PHARMACY

A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES





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Hospital pharmacy provides pharmacists with the opportunity to work in a supportive team environment and be actively involved in patient care.

It offers variety, both in the roles you can have, such as clinical or management, and in the types of hospitals you can work in – city or country, small or large, general or specialist.

Working in a hospital is an option at any stage of your pharmacy career – some pharmacists start out in hospital practice while others move into it later for a different pharmacy experience.

Any registered pharmacist can work in a hospital – you don't need additional qualifications, nor do you need to have done your pre-registration training in a hospital. In a hospital, you work in an environment where you are supported while you pick up new skills, regardless of the stage of your pharmacy career. The broad array of skills that you develop working in a hospital is highly sought after in other practice settings.

As a hospital pharmacist, you are rewarded for your skills. Pharmacists in public hospitals receive a competitive salary package, including generous overtime, leave loading and many other attractive benefits and conditions. A unique benefit is the ability to retain entitlements such as long-service and sick leave when moving from one public hospital to another. Hospital pharmacy offers a career path with opportunities for promotion. It also offers flexibility, with about one third of hospital pharmacists currently working part time.

Being a pharmacist in a hospital means...

- Being a highly respected healthcare professional;
- Being part of a team;
- Working in an interesting, exciting and stimulating work place;
- Having a secure and stable job with a career path, attractive benefits and conditions and flexibility;
- Making a difference – to others and to you.

Go on! Give it a go.



Being a pharmacist in a hospital means...

Caring



As a pharmacist in a hospital, you are actively involved in patient care. As the medicines expert of the patient-care team, you will contribute to decisions about patients' treatment. When working on hospital wards, you will visit your patients each day to review their medicines, monitor their progress and make sure they understand how to take their medicines correctly.

Educating



Doctors will ask you for advice on the most appropriate dose or form of medicine or to give an opinion about the use of certain medicines in a person with a particular clinical problem.

You could find yourself teaching doctors and nurses about appropriate use of medicines and how to minimise medicine errors. You could also be supervising and teaching pharmacy students and pre-registrants.

You may be a member of specialised hospital committees such as the Drugs and Therapeutics Committee or the Medication Safety Committee and offer crucial opinions and expertise about how the hospital should manage the use of medicines and the large budget needed to buy them.

Community pharmacists and healthcare professionals from other hospitals may also contact you for information about new medicines and treatments.

Of course you will also be involved in educating, advising and informing patients and their families about how to use medicines safely and effectively.

Team Work



As a pharmacist in a hospital, you are part of a team of pharmacists – it may be a team of 2 or 3 or as many as 40 to 50 in larger hospitals. As a new graduate, or an experienced pharmacist new to hospital practice, you can develop the skills you require and familiarise yourself with hospital practice in a supportive team environment.

You are also a valued member of the hospital team, working alongside doctors and nurses and other healthcare professionals to facilitate the safe, effective and appropriate use of medicines.

Making



Although most medicinal products are now manufactured by the pharmaceutical industry, hospital patients often require individualised medicines that need to be prepared by a pharmacist. Examples include cancer treatments, intravenous feeding solutions, creams and ointments to treat skin conditions and alternative formulations for patients unable to swallow commercially available tablets/capsules.

Pharmacists work in specialised sterile or cytotoxic rooms to prepare some of these products, and need to ensure that the materials they use and the processes they follow meet exacting quality control standards.



WORK

Some roles of pharmacists in hospitals are:

- **Clinical pharmacy** – working in wards and other clinical areas such as the emergency department and outpatient clinics to provide patient care alongside doctors and nurses.
- **Medicines information** – searching and evaluating published medical and pharmaceutical literature to provide answers to enquiries from patients, doctors, nurses and other pharmacists.
- **Dispensing and patient medication counselling** – many hospital patients require complex and specialised medicine regimens that you don't often see outside a hospital. These patients rely heavily on the hospital pharmacist for information to ensure they know how to use their medicines.
- **Clinical trials** – some hospitals are involved in large numbers of clinical trials, and pharmacists are responsible for coordinating and monitoring these trials.
- **Hospital in the Home** – some patients are treated as hospital inpatients in their homes, many are treated daily with intravenous medicines that are prepared and monitored by the hospital pharmacist.
- **Drug Use Evaluation** – an important part of hospital pharmacy services is the ongoing monitoring of prescribing patterns and development of prescribing guidelines to improve the quality use of medicines.

You can choose to specialise in one of these areas or take a role that includes all of these activities. Whatever you do, working as a pharmacist in a hospital is challenging, rewarding, varied and full of opportunities.

“Working in hospital is for anyone who wants to be at the cutting edge of pharmacy, who wants to work with patients, or who wants to have a balance between life and work. It offers all these choices. The best thing about working in a hospital as a pharmacist is that there are so many possibilities. I may move into management or academia, but remain involved in teaching and clinical work. What ever I do will be challenging and retain a patient focus.”

Nick Jones, Clinical Teacher, The Royal Melbourne Hospital



Prescription for success



Darlene Smith, Director of Pharmacy, Wimmera Health Care Group, Horsham

Darlene decided on pharmacy when she went to a university Open Day and has never looked back. "Pharmacy combined my interest in business and science. Best still, it meant that I was working in health and with people," she says.

In her role she dispenses medicines, provides clinical pharmacy services to patients, including reviewing their medicine charts and counselling them about their medicines. She also provides advice about medicines to other hospital staff and community groups. As the Director of Pharmacy, Darlene manages the pharmacy department – overseeing a team of four pharmacists, managing the staff budget, drug budget, and IT and equipment needs. She also participates in Quality Use of Medicines and Clinical Risk Management projects.

"I suspect that many people considering pharmacy as a career don't really know what opportunities there are in the country because they've never thought about it. I'm living proof, if you like, that you can have a satisfying job and be greatly valued for your expertise, have a great life style – and live in the country," she says.

Follow your heart



Nick Jones, Clinical Teacher, Pharmacy Department, The Royal Melbourne Hospital

Nick has worked in hospital pharmacy for 11 years, a career that has taken him around Australia and overseas where he has worked in a range of pharmacy specialties including outpatient dispensaries and a variety of clinical areas including paediatrics, aged care, cardiology and intensive care. He chose hospital pharmacy for a career that was dynamic and people oriented.

In his current role, Nick is involved in training, educating and supervising pharmacy students, pre-registrants and new clinical pharmacists. Most of this teaching occurs on the hospital wards, at the patients' bedside. This enables him to interact regularly with patients, doctors and nurses and contribute to patient care. Nick also runs an education program for doctors and nurses about quality use of medicines, prescribing techniques and minimising medicine errors.

"I really enjoy the chance to use my knowledge about medicines in so many different ways – advising, communicating and educating. There are not many jobs that I know when you are an expert in something and have the chance to use your expertise on a daily basis. Every situation that a patient is facing is different. I have to think on my feet, often about very complex medicine problems."

Go to www.shpa.org.au to see career profiles of other hospital pharmacists



What's great about hospital pharmacy?

"Hospital pharmacy has everything that you would want for a career: lots of choice, the chance to meet interesting people and make good friends."

Sally Yeung, Royal Children's Hospital

"I worked for 13 years in community pharmacy before coming to work in a hospital. I never realised how much hospital pharmacy has to offer pharmacists. I am more directly involved in the initiation of treatment as doctors and nurses ask my opinion ... and treat me as a professional colleague."

Lara Armellin, Royal Children's Hospital

"I don't know many jobs that allow people to work part time in interesting and vital positions. Hospital pharmacy is certainly inclusive in how it treats part-time and full-time workers."

Anne McGrath, Austin Hospital

"One of the best things about hospital pharmacy is that you can progress up the career ladder relatively quickly if you are focussed. I have been lucky enough to have had some great opportunities."

Michael Dooley, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

EDUCATING



Consider working as a pharmacist in a hospital because...

- It is stimulating, challenging, and rewarding;
- It gives you the chance to be actively involved in the care of patients and to make a difference to their lives;
- Hospitals are an exciting, dynamic and sociable work place;
- You will never be short of a job, whether you want to work part time or full time;
- It provides you with many different career options – inside and outside the hospital system;
- It is a career with variety, for today or forever;
- It opens doors to a world of possibilities.

More information

For more information about hospital pharmacy, to read career profiles of other hospital pharmacists and much more, go to www.shpa.org.au

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The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia

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