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Evaluation of specialty pharmacy productivity metrics to create an updated standardized productivity tool

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Background

- The number of specialty pharmacy medications has increased and is only projected to grow as more medications are approved for complex, chronic disease states [1,2].
- Specialty medications are associated with high costs, high risks, and high complexity requiring extensive time and efforts to make medications safe and affordable for patients.
- Much of this health system-based specialty pharmacy's productivity has been measured using a weighted scoring system for new vs. refill prescriptions.
- With updated specialty pharmacy accreditation standards, stricter payer requirements, and shifting limited distribution medication complexities, there is a substantial focus on quality, clinical outcomes, patient monitoring, customer service metrics, and reporting that is incorporated into the workflow.

Purpose

- To evaluate the work processes at a large health system-based specialty pharmacy
- Create a standardized productivity tool that will be used to ensure safe pharmacy practices and justify future full-time equivalent (FTE) approvals

Objectives

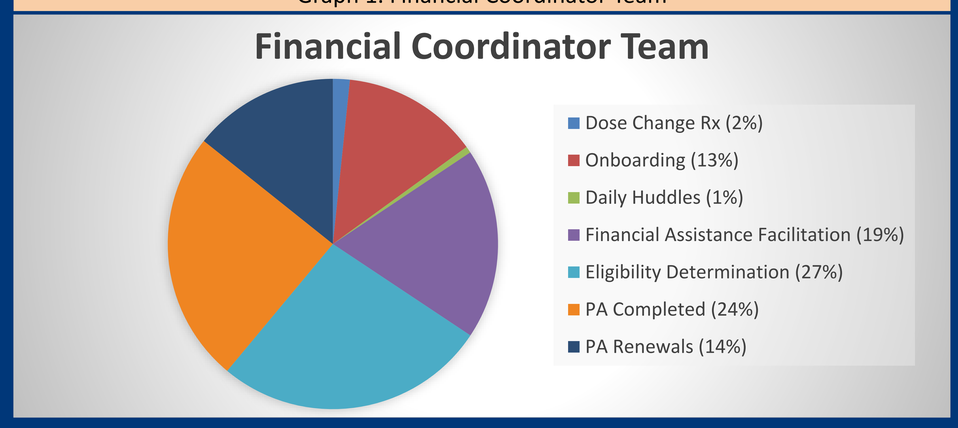
- Determine time spent on staff tasks based on specific job function and evaluate staff productivity at a large health system-based specialty pharmacy to create and implement a standardized productivity tool
- Determine a standard daily workload range for staff based on specific pharmacy team roles

Methodology

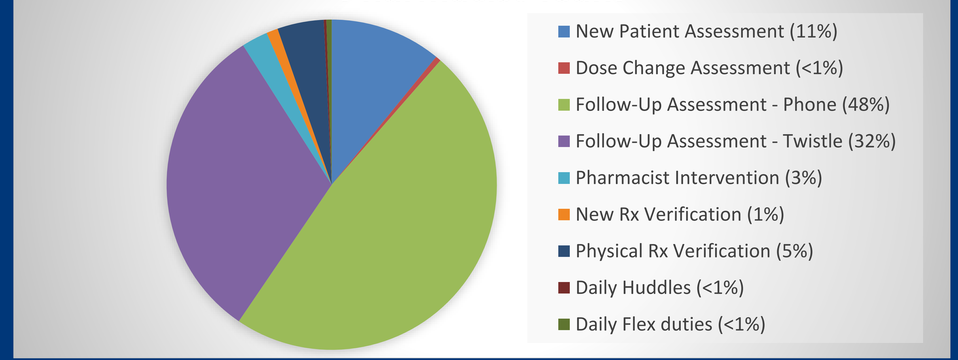
- IRB status
  - Exempt
- Study design
  - Single-centered quasi-experimental implementation study
  - Time study for each pharmacy team
- Study timeline
  - Evaluation of pharmacy workflow: October-December 2020
  - Creation of productivity tool: January-March 2021
  - Analysis of endpoints: March-April 2021
- Inclusion criteria
  - Specialty pharmacy staffing pharmacists and pharmacy technicians
- Exclusion criteria
  - Specialty pharmacy leadership team, data analysts, pharmacy billing specialist, pharmacy purchaser, and front desk staff

Results

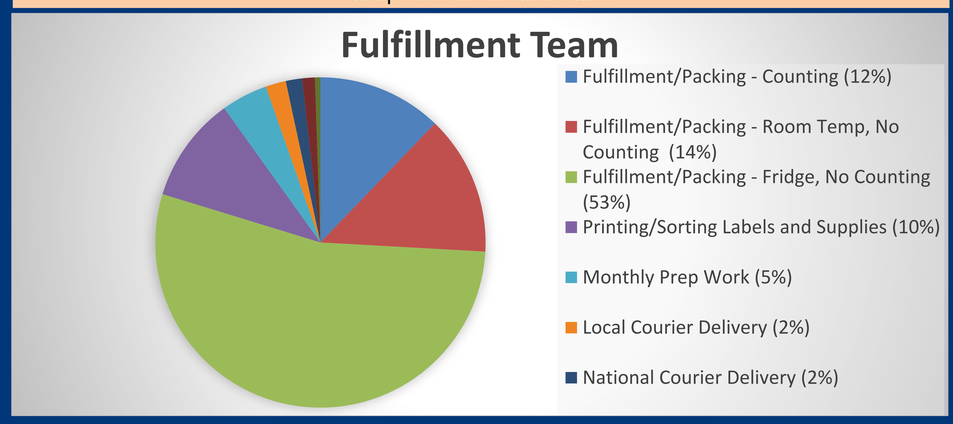
Graph 1. Financial Coordinator Team



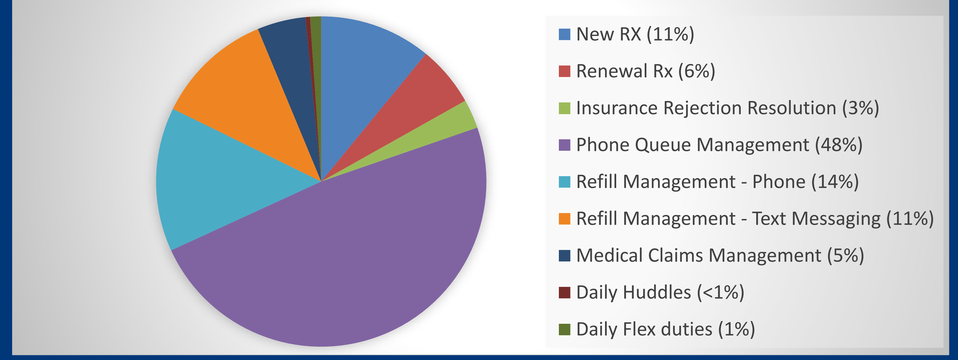
Graph 2. Pharmacist Team



Graph 3. Fulfillment Team



Graph 4. Call Center Team



*Monthly paid time off and meetings are not included in graphs

Results Continued

Workflow Input Productivity Factors:	
Access Team:	**Production Team:**
New Prescription Referrals	Refrigerated Prescriptions
Dose Change Prescription Referrals	Counting/Mixing Prescriptions
Prior Authorization Renewals	Local vs. National Courier Delivery
Prescriptions Requiring Prior Authorization	Prescriptions Requiring Delivery Issue Resolution
Call Center Team:	**Pharmacist Team:**
New Prescriptions Referrals	New Prescriptions Referrals
Dose Change Referrals	Dose Change Referrals
Renewal Prescriptions Filled	Renewal Prescriptions
Refill Dispenses	Refill Dispenses
Rejection Resolution Prescriptions	Patient Management Program Enrollment
Medical Claim Prescriptions	Text Message Platform Enrollment
Text Message Platform Enrollment	Pharmacist Intervention Requirement

Discussion

- A specialty pharmacy productivity tool that represents the team-specific tasks involved in specialty pharmacy workflow may be more reflective of specialty pharmacy productivity compared to a flat weighted scoring system for new vs. refill prescriptions as specialty pharmacy requirements and complexities expand.

<u>Limitations</u>:

- Due to time constraints and the frequency of each task occurrence, some tasks were only timed and recorded four times. More common tasks were timed and recorded at a higher frequency. Although the average was generated from these recordings to provide a more accurate representation, observing the less common tasks more frequently would provide an even more accurate calculation of task completion time.
- The results of this productivity tool were reflective of prescriptions and tasks from the year 2020. Other years may have variable results, notably a year that was not impacted by COVID-19, limiting the external validity of the productivity tool.
- This study was conducted at a single-centered specialty pharmacy.
- The productivity tool does not account for every possible scenario and unforeseen pharmacy issues. This calculator provides a conservative estimation for FTE requirements. It is important to anticipate FTE threshold limits and plan for variability and turnover.

Conclusions

- This study suggests that a weighted tool that merely assesses refill vs. new prescriptions may not capture the plethora of specialty pharmacy activities that are required for a single specialty prescription/patient
- A standardized productivity tool, such as the one created from this project, may be utilized to evaluate specialty pharmacy FTE requirements based on specific job function
- As specialty pharmacy continues to grow, covering more disease states, providing quality patient services and more enhanced clinical services, FTE productivity calculation tools should be restructured to reflect the true time spent providing safe and effective specialty pharmacy patient care.

References

1. Lotvin AM, Shrank WH, Singh SC, Falit BP, Brennan TA. Specialty Medications: Traditional And Novel Tools Can Address Rising Spending On These Costly Drugs. Health Affairs. 2014;33(10):1736-1744. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0511

2. Zuckerman AD, Carver A, Cooper K, et al. An Integrated Health-System Specialty Pharmacy Model for Coordinating Transitions of Care: Specialty Medication Challenges and Specialty Pharmacist Opportunities. Pharmacy (Basel). 2019;7(4). doi:10.3390/pharmacy7040163