Title: A cost-savings analysis of a pharmacy internship program in a hospital inpatient setting

Abstract:

Purpose: Pharmacy internship programs provide the opportunity for pharmacy students to work and learn in a pharmacy practice setting, however, there is scarce published data to demonstrate the value of a pharmacy internship program to either the pharmacy student or the institution. This study is the first in a series of studies to assess the overall benefit of pharmacy internship programs, specifically in the hospital inpatient setting. The goal of this study is to assess the financial benefit of an inpatient pharmacy internship program involving both clinical and operational roles.

Methods: The financial value of clinical services provided by interns was calculated using intervention data from August 2013 to April 2015. The savings from interns performing clinical work as compared to pharmacists were determined using the total time spent on interventions and comparing the midpoint hourly wage for interns and pharmacists. The savings from operational services provided by interns was calculated using total hours of intern operational work and comparing the midpoint hourly wage for interns and pharmacy technicians.

Results: The overall value of clinical services provided by interns was $206,230 annually. The cost difference between interns providing clinical services as compared to pharmacists was $13,960 annually. The cost savings associated with interns providing operational services was $11,440 annually.

Conclusion: There is a significant financial benefit to a hospital institution for supporting a pharmacy internship program. This financial benefit should reassure hospitals that developing, promoting and sustaining a pharmacy internship program provides value to the organization.

Next Steps: Further research is needed to elucidate the benefits of a pharmacy internship program to pharmacy students and determine what aspects of a pharmacy internship program are most beneficial to pharmacy students.