

OSF HealthCare Pharmacy Services is using telemedicine technology to keep a pharmacist's eyes on every drug order that comes through, no matter the time of day, an effort that has earned this year's Illinois Council of Health System Pharmacy Best Practice Award.

The new model of pharmacy care provides services through ePharmacy, a virtual telemedicine service. ePharmacists verify orders around-the-clock for every single hospitalized patient within the health-system.

Previously, eight of OSF HealthCare's 11 hospitals did not have 24 hour pharmacy services. Orders would be reviewed by a pharmacist the next morning, and he or she would then retrospectively make any needed corrections. Yet, by that time, medications had usually been administered, leaving a chance of the patient not receiving optimal drug therapy. OSF HealthCare's Integrated Telepharmacy Services closes that gap.

"The whole intent was to find one level of pharmaceutical care for our patients, no matter what facility they were at," said Jerry Storm, Senior Vice President, OSF HealthCare Pharmacy Services. "Whether they were here in Peoria, at Saint Francis Medical Center, or if they were at one of our smaller critical care access hospitals."

The Joint Commission, which accredits and certifies health care organizations across the United States, now expects that a pharmacist reviews all medication orders 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Now, an ePharmacist can review those orders and provide education at every OSF HealthCare facility, without being physically present.

"We have 24 hour pharmacy review of all orders that come through to ensure that the patient's lab values match the therapy that they are being administered, and the pharmacist intervenes with the prescriber right then, if there is a discrepancy possibly with that order," explained Storm.

The ePharmacy made a significant impact when it went live in August of 2016. ePharmacists identified and corrected at least one drug related problem for 20% of patients immediately prior to discharge.

According to Storm, because patients are often the ones administering their medications after discharge, they need to be well aware of any adverse reactions that may occur. Telepharmacy Services and ePharmacists specifically help with that process.

"The patient is going home with knowledge now to understand number one, why they need to continue taking the medication and not just stop it, and if they are also aware of any side effects that medication may be causing them," said Storm.

After Storm's team shared the results from its Telepharmacy efforts over the past year, the service was awarded the Illinois Council of Health System Pharmacy Best Practice Award.

Storm believes Integrated Telepharmacy Services could be a new model of care that has the potential to serve health systems across the country.