PSYCHIATRIC PHARMACISTS:

CORRECTIONAL HEALTH CARE

Caring for Inmates



"We have outstanding support from our PharmD Clinical staff here at Dallas County Correctional Health. Particularly in the challenging realm of psychiatric medications in pregnancy, Dr Nelson has delivered light from the darkness. She has stabilized countless numbers of our my most vulnerable, mostly underserved PREGNANT patients. **Dr Nelson applies evidence-based care to bring relief to a very troubled population. She is also my go-to consultant for drug-drug interactions which are so often overlooked. This is a level of expertise NOT commonly found!**"

— Julie Pao, MD
Obstetrician-gynecologist,
Correctional Health Dallas County

Managing Psychiatric Medications in Pregnant Inmates

It can be lonely leading the way, but after 20 years as a Board-Certified Psychiatric Pharmacist practicing at one of the nation's largest correctional systems, Dallas County Jail, Dr. Jennifer Nelson, has never looked back. As a Clinical Pharmacy Specialist in Psychiatry and Psychiatric Pharmacy Program Director at Parkland Health, she gradually gained the trust of medical staff members by accepting strategic projects.

Her current primary role of managing psychiatric medications for pregnant inmates is highly valued by the medical team and obstetrician. Her collaborative practice agreement with the psychiatry medical director allows her to manage medications for inmates with mental health and substance use disorders.

Dr. Nelson additionally manages complex medication side effects and shares her expertise by lecturing and precepting pharmacy students, pharmacy residents, physician assistant students and psychiatry residents.

Special Considerations in the Correctional Setting

In addition to the knowledge and skills acquired during her psychiatric pharmacy residency, some of Dr. Nelson's expertise in corrections came while on the job.

Special considerations in the jail setting that impact medication use include no glass vials, medication administration only twice a day, limitations on the use of medications with a high risk of misuse, and a lack of access to previous medical records or corroborating information from family or friends.

Operating within these limitations, Dr. Nelson is still able to deliver evidence-based care that optimizes psychiatric medications. allowing for inmates to improve and function at their highest level of competency in court.

A Typical Month of Making a Difference

165 patient visits

10-15 pregnant and/or postpartum consultations

3-5 clozapine patients including all monitoring

3 interventions for clozapine side effects (mostly constipation and excessive drooling)

"Dr. Nelson is a highly valued clinical partner who provides expert, evidence-based guidance on complex psychiatric medication management. **Her collaboration, clinical expertise, and commitment to quality care** significantly enhance patient outcomes and support the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary healthcare team."

— Larry Scurria, RPh, PD
Director of Pharmacy,
Correctional Health Dallas County

"Collaboration between providers and clinical pharmacists bridge the gap between diagnosis and optimal therapy, transforming complex treatment regimens into ones tailored towards recovery and with patients safety at the center of every decision. Dr. Jennifer Nelson is not just a great clinical pharmacist who manages medications, but she also protects patients, empowers the providers and elevates the entire health care team."

— Ukamaka Osuagwu, MSN, RN, PMHNP, FNP, CCHP, CCHP-RN
Advanced Practice Service Lead, Mental Health, Correctional Health Dallas County



Restoring Quality of Life

During clinic visits, Dr. Nelson met with a man who had a history of methamphetamine use and identified that he had undiagnosed ADHD. Methamphetamine had become the way for him to cope with difficulties in his attention, focus, and impulsivity. After starting medications for his ADHD, he had such an improvement in his symptoms that he felt, for the first time, that he could leave the jail and not go back to using methamphetamine to cope.

Another patient Dr. Nelson treated had experienced severe postpartum depression complicated by psychosis. Prior to her arrest, she made multiple attempts to access mental health care but barriers to accessing services prevented her from being evaluated and treated. As her illness progressed, her symptoms of psychosis ultimately contributed to acts resulting in an arrest. During her incarceration, she received the psychiatric care she had previously been unable to access including appropriate medications that stabilized her depression and psychosis prior to her release. This allowed her a safer transition to the community and helped her reunite with her family.

American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists

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This information brought to you by the American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists (AAPP), a professional association representing psychiatric pharmacists nationwide. Our members integrate into teams of health care professionals, making a difference in overall costs, treatment efficiencies, patient recovery and quality of life.

Learn more at aapp.org/psychpharm.