

PSYCHIATRIC PHARMACISTS: CERTIFIED COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINIC

Comprehensive Care for Vulnerable Patients

Medication Expert in the (Forensic) Assertive Community Treatment (FACT/ACT) Team

Making changes to an established healthcare system can be difficult but two years after establishing her position at the largest mental health authority in Texas, Dr. Heather Rozea Cooper, finds herself an essential member of the FACT/ACT team. As the initial Board-Certified Psychiatric Pharmacist (BCPP) hired at The Harris Center for Mental Health & IDD (“The Harris Center”), she was a trailblazer for establishing relationships with physicians to create and gain approval for collaborative drug therapy management (CDTM) with prescriptive authority protocol in this setting. Her work functioning under CDTM with prescriptive authority has allowed for expansion from one CDTM protocol with two physicians to five CDTM protocols with approximately 30 physicians and the hiring of two additional BCPPs.

Direct Patient Care

Her current primary role involves the management of complex psychotropic regimens of patients on the ACT/FACT team via direct physician referrals for medication management appointments. During these appointments, she works diligently to optimize medication regimens by utilizing her prescriptive authority allowing the initiation, modification, and discontinuation of medication orders. She also ensures therapeutic drug monitoring is completed for high-risk medications, such as clozapine, lithium, and divalproex, by ordering and reviewing labs and EKGs. In addition to working on this specialized team, she also receives referrals for medication management appointments from physicians in the adult mental health clinic for patients requiring closer follow up and/or extensive medication reviews. She also provides support for a pharmacy consult service she implemented and interfaced with the electronic health record.



“Dr. Cooper has been consulted for her expertise on 123 ACT/FACT patients. These patients are frequently on multiple high-risk medications, many require more than one antipsychotic, as well as patients taking or started on clozapine. Many patients have complex comorbid states further complicating appropriate psychiatric care. Dr. Cooper also provides detailed medication histories on every patient at SE ACT/FACT. This is critical to appropriate prescribing of medications and fosters appropriate therapeutic deprescribing. Dr. Cooper is a critical team member, and her services increase the safety and effectiveness of our treatments and decreases risks for patients and prescribers alike.”

—Mark Williamson, MD

Medical Director of ACT/FACT team, SE clinic
The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD

IMPACT ON PATIENT CARE

From June 1, 2022, to July 31, 2023,
BCPPs completed:



3221

direct patient care interventions

- 665 drug information
- 641 dosage changes
- 550 laboratory tests
- 448 medication initiations
- 425 medication discontinuations
- 185 schedule changes
- 175 patient education
- 102 transitions of care

From the establishment of CDTM in
September 2022 to July 2023,
BCPPs completed:



357

in-person patient appointments



214

telephone patient appointments

“I have referred several patients for consultation to Dr. Cooper with complicated medication histories who have had limited responses to medications for review and recommendations for future care. She thoroughly reviews the past medications and makes medication recommendations and when appropriate and with consultation with the MD, begins the proposed treatment with the patient. She follows up with the patient during titration/medication transitions until the next visit with the MD for long term follow up. Dr. Cooper has assisted in doing a thorough investigation of past medications on a patient who had been denied authorization to continue a medication he had been on for years and was the only medication he could tolerate. This was a life saving intervention for this patient. Overall, the CDTM team has been a positive asset to the treatment team.”

– Chantee Vavasseur, MD

Medical Director for Adult Mental Health, SE Clinic
The Harris Center for Mental health and IDD

Indirect Patient Care

Dr. Cooper and the other BCPP's role at The Harris Center are not limited to just direct patient care activities. They are also involved in several of the systems committees including pharmacy and therapeutics, substance use disorder, suicide prevention, and medication safety. Another core part of their role is providing continuing medical education to physicians and other providers on topics such as psychotropic medication usage in pregnancy. Finally, they are also involved in shorter-term projects such as development of order sets, modifying the electronic health record, and coordinating an agencywide vaccine event for underserved patients.

Special Considerations

In addition to the knowledge and skills acquired during their psychiatric pharmacy residencies, some of Dr. Cooper and the other BCPPs expertise in this setting came while on the job.

Special considerations in this setting include limiting access to medications with abuse potential, transitioning patients from dual antipsychotics to clozapine therapy (when appropriate), working collaboratively with non-clinician team members to ensure patient adherence to medication, reducing medication supply to those that are at high-risk of suicide, and prescribing medications that are on agency formulary which can be provided to patients at little to no cost through patient assistance programs.

American Association
of Psychiatric Pharmacists



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