

## MEDICATION SAFETY

### Starting in Medication Safety? Some hints for early career pharmacists

# Having influence to change systems

## Selling Medication Safety as an early career pharmacist



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Early career pharmacists are often working within systems that are not working for them: inefficient processes and fragmented engagement with the healthcare team.

When I started in Medication Safety, I had a rotational, early career pharmacist working with me. I had goals for their rotation, but I always asked them what frustrated them, what they wanted to change, and said that we'd do what we could to fix it during their rotation. Their surprise and delight made me happy every time.

**Even as an early career pharmacist there is often opportunity to influence system change.**

How do you do it? The simplest explanation is to think of it as marketing. You are selling something, albeit something of immense value: safer systems to prevent avoidable injury from medications.

Firstly, have respect for the people you are trying to convince. They are busy, have their own priorities, and they also strive for patient safety. So, take the time to create an argument for change, to persuade others to do what you think needs to be done. Engage with your colleagues as intelligent partners with shared goals. They aren't your opponents.

Secondly, understand how what YOU want will support organisational and/or department priorities. To sell something well, it must be something people want to buy, that meets their needs, and adds value to something that is important to them. Hospital leaders are driven by the [National Standards for Safety and Quality in Healthcare](#), the [Clinical Care Standards](#), [performance data](#), and national and state directives. Consider how your idea might be the answer they are looking for.

Use the tools available within the organisation to share the need for change. Consider organisation-wide quality systems: audits, data, measures of a gap in practice; reporting of the risk via the incident management system; and use patient stories and case examples that can demonstrate the opportunity in a way that is meaningful to your colleagues.

Finally, remember that you can't do it alone. Pharmacists working with me in Medication Safety have access to several key multidisciplinary governance committees, and my network of pharmacists, doctors, nurses, allied health staff, administrative staff, and consumer representatives. To influence anything, you'll need to consult, collaborate, make friends, communicate, and be open to learning from others. Consultation isn't telling others what you are doing, it is about learning more about where your idea fits with other systems. You may think you know the way forward but be open to modifying the idea so that it is more favourable to your colleagues.

**Looking at the big picture and engaging with the team as an assertive, open-minded, inspirational leader, you'll get a reputation for being a great person to work with.**

**Think about what you will achieve in your career if you start influencing medication safety early!**