

A clinical pharmacy assistant takes an average of 53 minutes to complete a complex medication history in the ED

Describing the activities a clinical pharmacy assistant (CPA) undertakes in the Emergency Department

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Background

Our emergency department (ED) is a mixed adult/paediatric ED and large, metropolitan trauma centre, seeing approximately 250 patients daily.

A clinical pharmacy assistant (CPA) was introduced in 2008 to assist in providing a timely and efficient clinical pharmacy service responsive to the department's needs.

The CPA works under the direction of the ED pharmacists and performs a variety of direct and indirect patient care and administrative activities.

Method

A list of CPA activities was compiled and a data collection form was developed to document activities performed during two two-week data collection periods in February and September 2019 (total of 4 weeks data collection).

Activities

'**clinical care**' - medication history, review of biochemistry, chart accuracy review, medication reconciliation, preparing medication lists or pharmacist handover,

'**indirect patient care**' - planned dispensing, unplanned or urgent dispensing

'**housekeeping**' - urgent imprest restocking, schedule 8 orders, restocking patient information, '**medicines information**' or '**other**'.

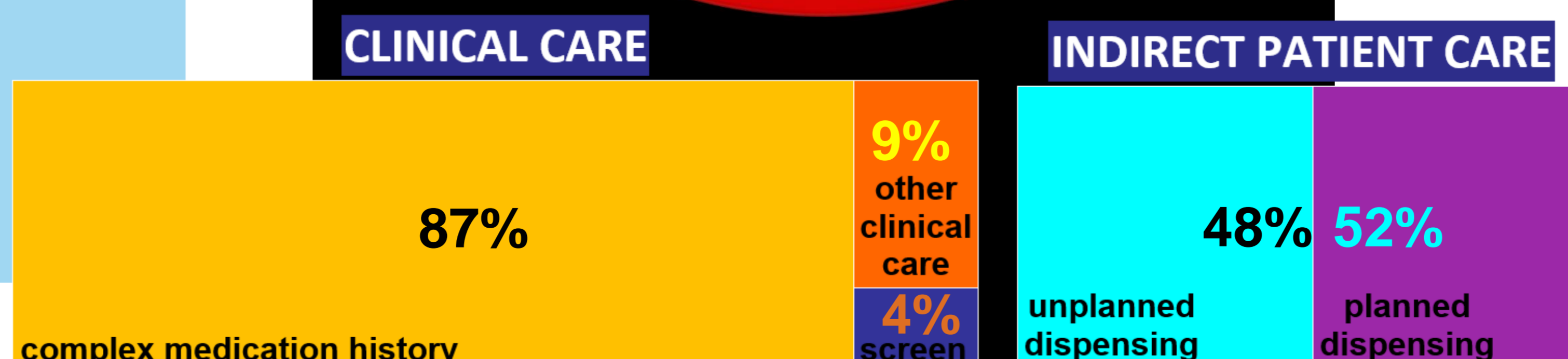
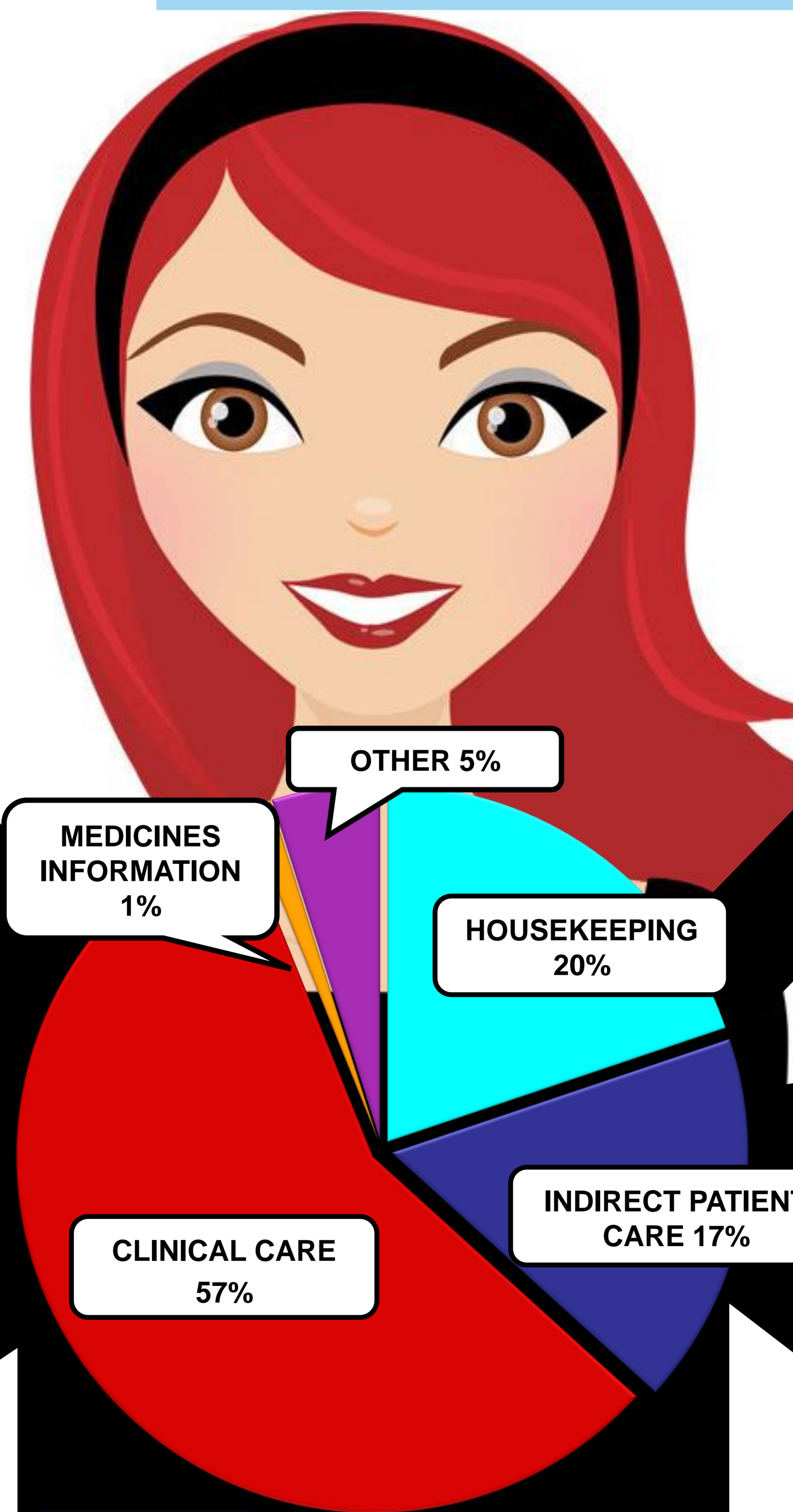
Related activities were grouped together as episodes of work.

Aim

To identify and quantify activities undertaken by clinical pharmacy assistants in the Emergency Department.

Results

- CPA's undertake an **average of 10 episodes of work per day** (range 7-13)
- 74% of these relate to patient care activities**, with 57% being clinical care activities
- 87% of clinical care episodes are classified as complex**, which included a patient's best possible medication history with biochemistry review, chart review and pharmacist handover. These took an average of 53.4 minutes per patient (range 35-90 minutes).
- During the February data collection period, the CPA also spent approximately 54 minutes per day on planned dispensing and 48 minutes on unplanned dispensing. After removing planned morning dispensing from the role, this changed to 9 minutes planned and 18 minutes unplanned dispensing in the September period



Conclusion

The ED is a fast-paced environment, requiring an efficient clinical pharmacy service. CPA's improve the quality of the pharmacy service by undertaking medication histories and administrative roles, thus allowing pharmacists to dedicate more time to their clinical service provision.

About the Author:

Susie Smith is a senior pharmacy assistant within the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN) with a passion for improving patient outcomes and their hospital experience.

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