



Drug dispensary moves into the robotic age

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On any one morning at Fiona Stanley Hospital, nurses administer 5000 doses of medication.

Each day, more than \$200,000 of drugs are purchased, received and distributed to more than 100 treatment areas throughout the hospital.

What's more, 3000 unique drugs are stocked – high-cost, highly-specialised drugs that require expert advice, handling and monitoring to ensure the correct and safe dosage for patients.

All this is achieved by what is the most sophisticated drug inventory management system in the southern hemisphere.

Barry Jenkins, the Chief Pharmacist at Fiona Stanley Hospital who is the driving force behind the hospital's new, automated pharmacy, said it was an investment in groundbreaking technology that delivered substantial benefits to the hospital and patients.



Image: Barry Jenkins – Chief Pharmacist – Fiona Stanley Hospital

How has the new technology changed medication management?

At the centre of the \$7 million system are robots, called Rowa.

“These robots scan, move and store medications within the Pharmacy department from the time they are delivered to the hospital to when they are required on the wards,” Barry said.

“They can stack medication packs with precision, enabling the Pharmacy to make the best use of all the available space for the storage of drugs.

“The robots are precise and very fast. In just a few seconds, pharmacists have the medications they require at the preparation area.”

How has the new solution improved the quality of care for patients?

The pharmacy robots at Fiona Stanley Hospital have converted most of the manual tasks associated with drug inventory management to be automated.

This has significant benefits for staff and patients.

“Staff, particularly nurses, can spend less time on controlled substance tracking and reporting, looking for keys and drugs, and less time on manually checking the controlled drug inventory for stock on hand,” Barry said.

“All of which means nurses can spend more time delivering better patient care.”

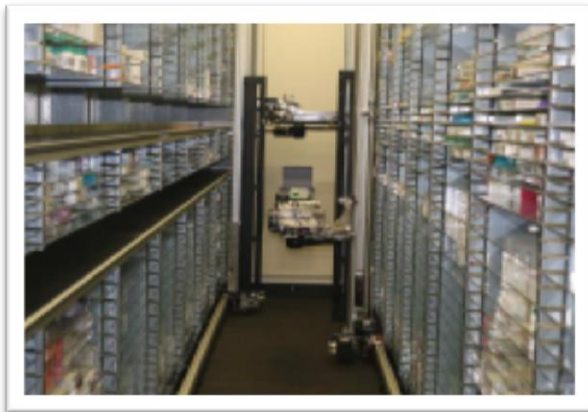


Image: Robot in action

The Future

Until the advent of automated drug inventory management, many aspects of medication management in WA had not changed since the 1970s.

“Since that time, however, workload pressures have increased and clinical needs have become more complicated,” Barry said.

Not only have drugs have become more powerful and complex, but also the increased pace and complexity of clinical work meant that drug management was not as efficient as it could be.

This increased the risk of medication errors, and delays in drug dispensing.

“At the end of the day using this type of advanced technology will greatly assist in reducing the risks associated with managing medications in modern day hospital environments,” Barry said.