



# Hospital Pharmacy Technician

H A N D B O O K

A female hospital pharmacy technician in a white lab coat is shown in profile, looking down at a task in a pharmacy setting. The background is slightly blurred, showing shelves with various pharmacy supplies.

## Top Challenges for Hospital Pharmacy Technicians

As a hospital pharmacy technician, you are a key member of the pharmacy and of the larger medical team. You're the "go-to" for medical staff who need prompt assistance with medications. And you're the detail-oriented team member who acts as the steward of the pharmacy's inventory. In your role, you face many demands that even the most seasoned technicians consider challenging.

Although patient care is at the center of everything you do, you often have to wrestle with specific day-to-day challenges. These challenges fall into three main categories: **(1) medical knowledge, (2) inventory management, and (3) fast-paced work environment.** The way you respond to these challenges directly affects the day-to-day functioning of your hospital's pharmacy and, therefore, the hospital's ability to care for its patients.

As a hospital pharmacy technician, your challenges may include:

## Medical & Procedural Knowledge

**Knowing the medications.** In the hospital environment, a pharmacy technician is counted on to have a deeper working knowledge of medications. You are counted on to be readily familiar with many of the products that are ordered and dispensed through the hospital pharmacy. Your knowledge prevents the incorrect medication from being ordered to fill a prescription. This ensures that patients are receiving the correct and proper treatments at all times, and prevents license forfeiture, which can happen if the wrong medication is dispensed.

**Knowing drug storage conditions.** A big part of “knowing the medications” is understanding the required storage conditions for each product in your hospital’s pharmacy. Some items must be stored at specific temperatures to maintain potency and avoid spoilage. Knowing and adhering to specific storage conditions ensures that drugs remain viable and available for use in treating hospital patients.

**Knowing hospital procedures.** As a member of the larger care team for patients, hospital pharmacy technicians may perform clinical tasks such as updating patient charts and preparing medications and IV fluids. As part of these responsibilities, they are required to know all relevant policies and procedures of the hospital related to patient care.

## Inventory Management

**Accurate and regular inventory management.** In addition to preparing and dispensing medications in a fast-paced setting, hospital pharmacy technicians are counted on to manage the pharmacy’s inventory accurately. This means removing expired and recalled products from the hospital pharmacy supply while ensuring that the pharmacy is stocked with ample inventory to meet the needs of the hospital. It also means performing routine inventory counts for an up-to-date picture of the inventory—all while operating within a full schedule of demanding pharmacy tasks.

**Legally compliant removal of controlled substances.** For the hospital’s drug return process, pharmacy technicians must be able to identify and sort controlled substances in a compliant manner. Unused controlled drugs that are not properly identified and disposed of lead to serious legal and regulatory compliance issues for the hospital.

**Timely removal of expired drugs.** Identifying expired products and pulling them from inventory is a critical part of a hospital pharmacy technician’s job. Swift and accurate removal of these products helps ensure that the hospital’s inventory is stocked only with products that are safe and viable for administration to patients.

## Operating in a Fast-paced Environment

**Focus and accuracy in a fast-paced environment.** Hospital pharmacy technicians must be able to perform highly detailed work in a busy environment with numerous potential distractions. Developing a laser-like focus while completing critical patient care tasks is critical.

**Organize and prioritize.** As a key clinical resource for the hospital medical team, a pharmacy technician can be called upon to fulfill hundreds of medication requests in a single day. To maintain the hospital’s workflow, technicians must be able to prioritize rapidly, often on the fly. Knowing the order and timing of medication requests and planning accordingly helps ensure that patient care tasks are completed efficiently and on time.



## Tips for Providing Excellent Service to the Medical Team

Although you don't operate within a retail environment, as a hospital pharmacy technician, you still provide "customer service." Unlike retail pharmacy technicians, who serve patients directly, your immediate "customers" are actually the members of the hospital's medical team: the nurses and doctors whose prescription and medication requests you fulfill every day.

Your strong organizational skills keep the hospital pharmacy running smoothly on the back end. But your helpfulness and problem-solving skills ensure a strong working partnership with the medical staff members you serve. Following are three important tips for providing highly valued service to the nurses and doctors you work with every day:

- 1. Build strong relationships.** As a hospital pharmacy technician, you need the ability to work effectively as part of a fast-paced clinical care team. Consciously seek to build strong relationships with the pharmacists, doctors, and nurses you serve; this supports a strong team dynamic, which builds trust in your role as a valuable hospital staff member.
- 2. Be a problem solver.** You will often be counted on to help smooth out kinks in the hospital workflow. Be the one to help resolve issues in the process of delivering medications to patients, such as a missing or delayed order. As the pharmacy team member who works most closely with nurses and others on the medical team, you're the "person on the ground" who is closest to solutions. Being able to solve problems independently of the pharmacist, who may often be unavailable, expands your ability to do your job effectively.
- 3. Diffuse conflict.** In a busy, potentially high-stress environment, always remember that you're part of a team of people who all have the same goal. In the event of errors or oversights, always be professional and communicate kindly with your coworkers. Seek to diffuse tension and redirect focus to completing the task at hand in a positive way that moves everyone forward.

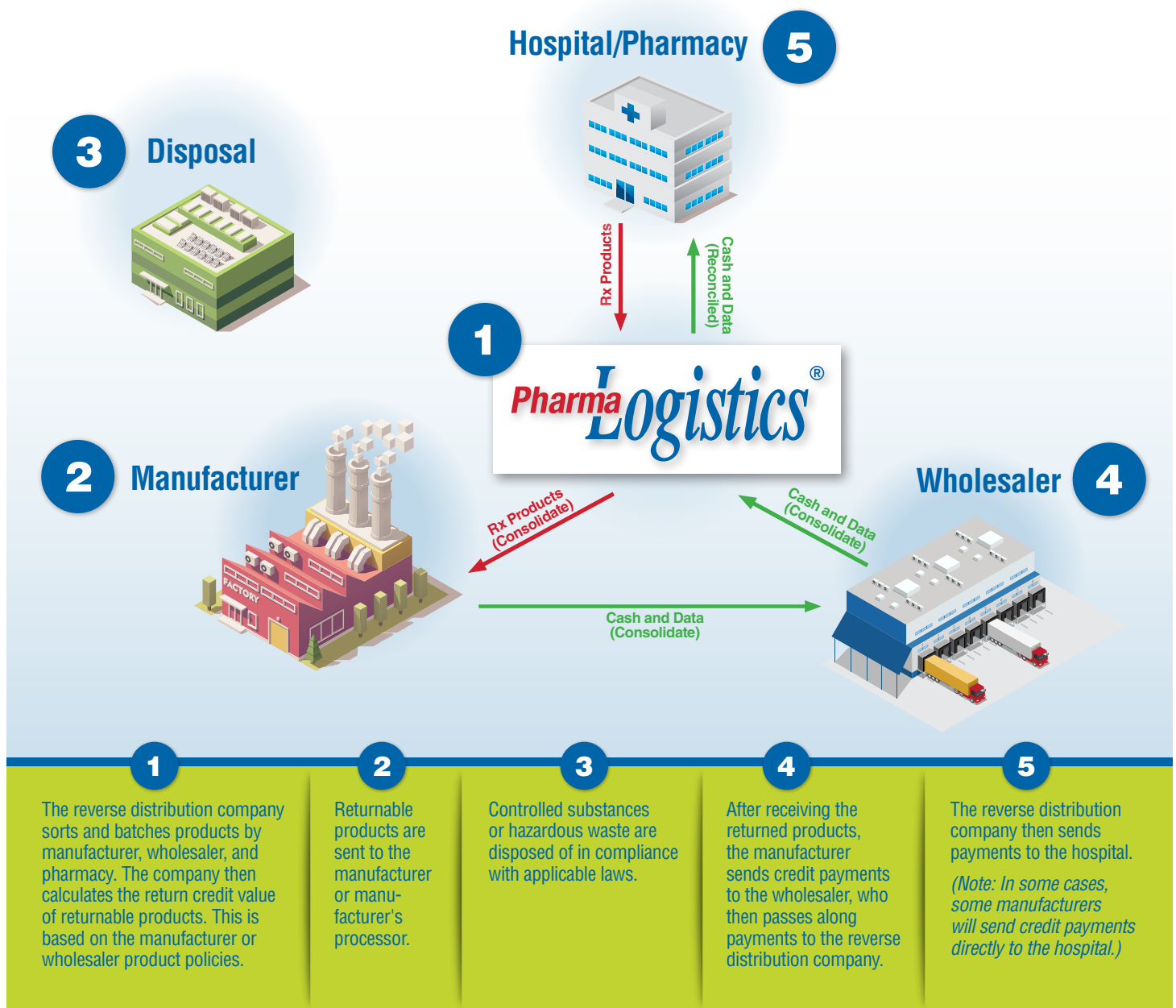
# Understanding the Drug Returns Process

## An Overview of Pharmaceutical Reverse Distribution

A large part of your role as hospital pharmacy technician is inventory management: keeping an accurate record of the products your pharmacy has in stock. Overall, the goal of your pharmacy is to order and stock the correct products and quantities to meet the needs of the hospital's patient population.

This includes removing expired or otherwise unusable products from your inventory, by working with a third party to return expired products to the manufacturer or wholesaler for credit. This “drug return” process is also known as reverse distribution.

Often, this process is coordinated by a reverse distribution company, e.g., Pharma Logistics. This company takes a hospital pharmacy's expired drug products and sends them back to the manufacturers for credit. This credit is then sent to the hospital. An overview of this process is shown in the diagram below:



# Top Reasons Why Drugs Are Non-Returnable

Sometimes, medications or other pharmaceutical products from a hospital's pharmacy cannot be returned to the manufacturer for credit. There are many reasons why items may be classified as non-returnable. Reasons depend on the return policy of each individual manufacturer.

Manufacturer policies are constantly subject to change, so it's important to maintain access to the most current version of the policies for each item in the pharmacy's inventory in order to know which ones are returnable. Nevertheless, here are the most common reasons that a pharmaceutical product may not be returnable:

## Poor condition

1. **Damaged product:** The product or container has visible damage.
2. **Damaged label:** The product label is defaced.
3. **Not in original package:** The product has been repackaged.
4. **Has prescription label:** The prescription label is still on the product.



## Designated non-returnable

5. **Sold as non-returnable:** The product was sold by the manufacturer as explicitly non-returnable.
6. **Lot number:** The product has a non-returnable lot number. For example, products sold in discounted or specially priced lots are generally non-returnable.
7. **Partials not accepted:** The manufacturer does not accept "partials," i.e., returns of partially filled product packages.
8. **"Returns not accepted":** The manufacturer does not accept returns.

## Out of returnable date range

9. **Too far out-of-date:** The product is too far past its expiration date. In general, the eligibility period for returns ranges from 3 to 12 months after product expiration.
10. **Too far in-date:** The product is within its expiration date as deemed by the individual manufacturer policy.



## Top Reasons Why Drugs Are Non-Returnable

### Free or discounted

- 11. Free product:** The product is a complimentary item or a sample.
- 12. Discounted, short-dated:** Products close to expiration, i.e., “short-dated” products that were sold at a discount are usually non-returnable.

### Other

- 13. Below minimum quantity or dollar value:** The product is below the minimum quantity or below the minimum dollar value that the manufacturer will accept.
- 14. From an unauthorized distributor:** Products purchased from unauthorized distributors are not eligible for return credit.

# Types of Pharmaceutical Returns Services

With the range of reverse distribution services offered by various companies, it can sometimes be challenging to determine which ones may be right for a hospital's pharmacy. The following is a brief overview of the types of expired pharmaceutical returns services available today.

## Two Main Service Types

Generally speaking, there are two core services available for completing pharmaceutical returns:



### Onsite Service



**Prepare and Package.** Trained and licensed representatives from a pharmaceutical returns company come onsite to handle ready-to-return materials. They check paperwork, ensure proper packaging, and prepare shipping for carrier pickup.

➤ **Benefit:** *A service that saves you and your team time that can be spent focusing on patient care.*



### Box & Ship Service



A hospital pharmacy can choose to pack and ship its own returns manually, sending them directly to the pharmaceutical returns company, which provides the boxes and prepaid labels in advance.

➤ **Benefit:** *A great, lower-cost option if a hospital pharmacy team prefers to prepare and send in their own pharmaceutical returns.*



# Types of Pharmaceutical Returns Services

## Additional Services

Additional services depend on the capabilities of the pharmaceutical returns company, and can include:

### Rapid Credit



A hospital pharmacy can receive credits for returned items quickly—within 14 days from the date the items are received by the pharmaceutical returns company.

➤ **Benefit:** *An excellent way to boost cash flow quickly—with reduced reconciliation time—instead of waiting 12 months, the industry standard.*

### Controlled Substance and Waste Destruction



The pharmaceutical returns company will handle removal and disposal of controlled substances and pharmaceutical waste to ensure compliance with applicable FDA and EPA regulations.

*\*Note: Pharma Logistics is one of the few companies that have this capability, which requires special licensing from the EPA and DEA.*

➤ **Benefit:** *Ensures that your pharmacy stays in compliance with current laws regarding management and disposal of controlled and waste pharmaceuticals.*

### Inventory Management Services



Some pharmaceutical reverse distributors partner with inventory management companies to offer complete inventory assistance. Licensed crew members come on site to complete a full, physical inventory for the pharmacy.

➤ **Benefit:** *A service that saves a hospital's pharmacy team from hours of tracking and cataloguing products, so they can focus on patient care.*



# Why Choose Pharma Logistics?

## We Handle Your Hospital's Expired Drug Return Process— From Start to Finish

As a hospital pharmacy technician, a key function of your job is inventory management. And the pharmaceutical drug return process is an important part of inventory management:

1. The first step in the returns process is **clearing your pharmacy's shelves** of expired, damaged, or otherwise unusable inventory.
2. The next step is **sending back returnable items** to the manufacturer or wholesaler for credit and arranging for proper disposal of non-returnable items in compliance with federal laws.
3. **Return credits** are then sent back to your pharmacy or hospital as coordinated by the reverse distributor.

## This Is Quite a Bit of Work.

Some pharmacy teams choose to handle this work themselves.



Throughout this process, your pharmacy team will need to track the status and processing of returns and credits to account for every item that has left the pharmacy.

# Why Choose Pharma Logistics?

## But Did You Know That There Are Reverse Distribution Services Available to Handle Most of These Steps For You?

Pharma Logistics offers service options to help you and your pharmacy team to:

- **Clear your inventory** of expired items and return them for credit, or send them for disposal.
- **Provide chain of custody** and compliance with DEA Form 41 for the removal and disposal of controlled substances.
- **Quickly track the status** of returns and credits with a self-service tool that's easy to use and that provides visibility into the overall process.

Pharma Logistics provides tools and services to handle most of the reverse distribution process for you – **including onsite packaging and shipping.**

### With Pharma Logistics

From packaging to disbursement, your entire expired drug return process is completely handled—with clear and easy tracking every step of the way.



### Real-time Analytics and Reporting

Not every vendor gives you reports showing where your credit is in the return process, and how much you can expect to collect. It can be hard to make business decisions and review your expected return value without real-time insight into the process. Pharma Logistics provides you analytics and a dashboard highlighting each return project, manufacturer payouts and where your credit is in the process. And all of the data can be exported to support compliance and financial reporting.

# Pharma Logistics Services

## Handling Your Pharmaceutical Returns Process the Easy Way



### Box & Ship Service

A hassle-free way for your pharmacy team to mail in returns...

For on-demand pharmaceutical returns, Pharma Logistics offers a convenient Box & Ship service. Simply file your DEA 222 form, and send your returns in the prepaid pack-and-ship boxes—and we'll handle the rest.



#### With the Box & Ship service, you receive:

- Prepaid UPS shipping labels
- Tamper-proof bags
- Online access to DEA 222 request forms
- Online access to Schedule III-V inventory forms

#### Guaranteed Value:

*The hospital receives 100% of the expected return value (ERV) of its pharmaceutical product returns or Pharma Logistics will refund the difference of your service fee.*



### Onsite Service

Full-service support for pharmaceutical returns...

Save hours of paperwork and labor with the Pharma Logistics Onsite Service. Our Onsite Service is the easiest way for your hospital to stay compliant and collect payment for pharmaceutical returns.



#### With Onsite Service, a Pharma Logistics bonded service rep takes care of it all:

- Removal of any products you can't dispense
- Controlled substance inventories
- Legend and OTC inventories
- DEA Form 222 completion
- In-person account summaries to keep you informed

## Pharma Logistics Services



### Rapid Credit

The hospital receives pharmaceutical return payments within 14 days...

With Rapid Credit, Pharma Logistics issues payment within 14 days after receiving a hospital's expired pharmaceuticals. With quick and easy signup, your pharmacy team can keep the inventory up to date, minimize reconciliation time—all while supporting cash flow and compliance for the hospital.



Pharma Logistics is able to offer this powerful prefunded option based on a patented processing system for calculating the expected return value (ERV) of pharmaceutical products to a high degree of accuracy.

#### With Rapid Credit, you receive:

- Analytics to track compliance and credit returns
- Payment within 14 days from receipt of returned items. (Not all products are eligible for Rapid Credit payment)

#### **Accelerated Credit Processing:**

*Supports cash flow and ROI for your hospital's pharmacy budget.*



## **Pharma Logistics: Additional Services to Make Your Pharmacy Job Easier**

### **Hospital Pharmacy Inventory Management Services**

#### **Get complete inventory assistance**

To meet the needs of your hospital pharmacy team, Pharma Logistics has partnered with companies who provide comprehensive inventory services. Experienced, credentialed crew members will come onsite to complete a full, physical inventory for your pharmacy. Your team will receive real-time reporting, data files, and fast turnaround on final results. Best of all, inventory services can be paid for with returns credit, meaning no separate invoices or impact to the hospital pharmacy budget.

# Pharma Logistics: Keeping You Compliant

Pharma Logistics takes licenses and regulations seriously—and we are committed to keeping you fully compliant. We focus on generating timely and accurate credits for your pharmacy while following strict company procedures for maintaining regulatory compliance.

- The industry's first Verified-Accredited Wholesale Distributor (since 2011)
- Drug Enforcement Agency license for Schedule II-V
- Licensed or approved in all 50 states and Puerto Rico
- Statement on Standards for Attestation Engagements No. 16 Type 1 attestation
- Healthcare Distribution Management Association Returns Task Force member
- Fully bonded and insured
- Environmental Protection Agency Large Quantity Generators status

Not only do we adhere to all applicable local, state and federal statutes, but we schedule regular and ongoing continuing education for our entire staff. All service reps adhere to proper procedures and know how to help ensure compliance with:

 <b>DEA:</b> Drug Enforcement Administration	 <b>DOT:</b> Department of Transportation	 <b>EPA:</b> Environmental Protection Agency
 <b>JCAHO:</b> Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations	 <b>FDA:</b> Food and Drug Administration	 <b>NIOSH:</b> The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
 <b>OIG:</b> Office of Inspector General	 <b>OSHA:</b> Occupational Safety and Health Administration	 <b>HIPAA:</b> Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act



**Corporate Headquarters**

1795 N. Butterfield Road  
Suite 203  
Libertyville, IL 60048

---

**Fulfillment Center**

1050 E. High Street  
Mundelein, IL 60060  
888.729.7427  
Fax: 847.837.1226

[plcustomerservice@pharmalogistics.com](mailto:plcustomerservice@pharmalogistics.com)  
[www.pharmalogistics.com](http://www.pharmalogistics.com)

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