

The power of one platform:

Information is at the heart of every clinical formulary decision

Aligning care decisions through a unified information solution

Your health system strives to provide the best possible patient care. But often, many of the world's leading healthcare providers find this fundamental goal challenged when the very solutions clinicians trust to help inform their treatment decisions prove more cumbersome than helpful.

This was the exact situation that plagued a busy, not-for-profit hospital in the Western United States. Despite being a leader in care quality, its clinical staff struggled to align ineffective and underused decision support solutions with outmoded, analog internal resources, including a difficult-to-access IV guideline list, a formulary spreadsheet that was updated annually, and a restriction criteria document that was only accessible to pharmacists. To achieve clinical effectiveness, care teams need the most accurate, evidence-based information and tools designed to work together seamlessly and be readily accessible.

Barriers to information access. Gaps in communication. Members of the care team not on the same page. The hospital needed to unite its continuum of care.

Better information, better outcomes

The answer came in the form of a suite of clinical effectiveness solutions from Wolters Kluwer, developed to work together from one platform to provide harmonized decision support throughout an institution. For this hospital, clear, concise and clinically relevant UpToDate® Lexidrug™ drug information integrated with Formulink, a customizable, hospital-specific formulary management database, provided the consistency, alignment, and efficiency that was missing. "We were able to consolidate all of those documents into one," explained the organization's clinical pharmacy specialist. "The biggest benefit I've seen is that everyone now knows where to go to access the information they need."



The need for formulary management

Between 2015 and 2017 hospitals observed an **18.5% increase** in average total drug spend per admission.¹

¹ <https://www.aha.org/2019-01-15-recent-trends-hospital-drug-spending-and-manufacturer-shortages>

Using Formulink to streamline the clinical workflow

Formulink custom formulary database integrates with Lexidrug referential drug decision support, and also with UpToDate clinical decision support. This vital in-workflow link gives pharmacists, prescribers, and any other clinician who requires the information convenient online access to hospital-specific policies and drug lists alongside trusted Lexidrug referential drug information.

According to the hospital's pharmacy specialist, it was one of the primary reasons the UpToDate's suite of solutions was selected.

It allows for efficient formulary management "so you don't have to print out 80 pages to use the formulary," he explained. "It's one-stop shopping: basic drug information; IV guidelines which we customized to match our old guide; we added all our restriction criteria into the drug monographs; and we have our formulary. That's four birds with one stone."

In a single search, clinicians can quickly view whether or not a drug is on formulary at the hospital, and then click on the organization's restrictions and guidelines without disrupting workflow. The search also provides Lexidrug medication safety information and the latest clinical insights in the same view. The hospital can select which Lexicomp drug monograph fields it wants "shared" in its custom database, including key data on dosing, precautions, administration and more.

With Lexidrug plus Formulink as a consolidated, easily searchable drug and clinical information offering, a variety of clinicians are taking greater advantage of valuable resources, the specialist noted. "In the old days, they either didn't look it up or struggled looking it up. Now, we've attached Web links (to hospital policies) to monographs. Pharmacists don't have to struggle to look these things up. Nurses are no longer using multiple different resources. It helps with data transfer and communication of knowledge."

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The power of customization

The key to Formulink is customization, and the service allows Lexidrug and UpToDate subscribers to build, maintain, and shape their own formulary databases with the support and experienced advice of a dedicated production manager from Wolters Kluwer.

For the hospital's pharmacy specialist, who is the manager of his organization's custom formulary database, the process is "pretty straightforward," he said. The specialist is responsible for creating and maintaining all the custom fields, monographs and policies the hospital wants included in its individualized database. He is able to update and edit the formulary himself thanks to the Lexidrug Information Management System, or LIMS.

"I've even been able to create drug monographs for medications that aren't in the Lexidrug database, like certain probiotics we stock," he said. "LIMS lets me build my own, so the pharmacists can know what the restrictions are. It's very customizable."

The Wolters Kluwer production manager who helped him build his initial database and trained him maintains ongoing contact with the specialist to offer assistance and new insights and to answer any questions that may come up as he updates his organization's formulary. "She's been a great help and resource to me," he said.





It starts with evidence and content you trust

As important as effective formulary management was to the hospital in figuring out its approach to clinical decision support, its stakeholders knew the core of the solution still had to be evidence-based content their clinicians could trust at the point of care. Specifically, they were looking for ease of use and a clinical focus to support holistic treatment decisions extending beyond drug dosing.

“Pharmacists know and trust Lexidrug,” the specialist said. “As a pharmacist, Lexidrug is the natural place to go, because you’ve been using it since pharmacy school.”

Lexidrug fit the criteria the hospital was looking for. Prior to implementing Wolters Kluwer solutions, the specialist explained, they used a different, more research-focused electronic drug reference. Clinicians frequently experienced difficulty finding the information they needed, he said.

“When you’re a frontline pharmacist, your customer is probably waiting on the line for an answer. The benefit of Lexidrug is you can pull up the information you want quickly and find the answer.” The end result is a satisfied user coupled with a better patient experience.