

**Elicia Montelongo****Pharmacy Inventory Technician, Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority****Hayes Award Nominee**

Elicia Montelongo's contributions to the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority (CIHA) have elevated both the efficiency and quality of patient care, particularly through her leadership in streamlining the non-formulary medication process. As a Pharmacy Inventory Technician, Elicia recognized a need for better coordination, faster access to critical medications, and more clarity in communication—and she didn't wait to be asked to solve it. She proactively stepped into the role of Secretary for the Pharmacy & Therapeutics (P&T) Committee and reshaped a complex, cross-functional process into a model of effective collaboration.

Her efforts now touch nearly every corner of CIHA's clinical operations: coordinating with providers, pharmacy staff, primary care teams, and external partners to ensure patients receive non-formulary medications—many of them time-sensitive—promptly and reliably. From cancer therapies to infection treatments, her work has had a direct, meaningful impact on patient outcomes and staff workload.

Elicia's success is backed by measurable outcomes. Despite a growing number of non-formulary consults—from 556 in 2022 to 654 in 2024—she has reduced the average time to resolution by 8.3%, improving both speed and reliability in medication access. Additionally, her detailed review of insurance formularies and meticulous follow-up on prior authorizations have significantly contributed to increased pharmacy revenue—jumping 50.5% since 2022.

Her work is closely aligned with CIHA's strategic priority of being the Provider of Choice. Without her improvements, patients would either face delays or incur out-of-pocket costs for critical medications. Thanks to Elicia, access to care has improved, patient trust has grown, and internal teams—especially Primary Care—have experienced decreased administrative burdens.

Elicia's efforts have created a sustainable system that promotes consistency, efficiency, and financial stewardship. From managing storage protocols and order timelines to keeping teams updated on approvals, she ensures the entire process runs like clockwork. Her role is indispensable in bridging communication gaps and accelerating outcomes, especially in a system where time and coordination are often the difference between delay and healing.

Supported by colleagues across pharmacy, primary care, and administration, Elicia Montelongo represents the best of what it means to serve with initiative, integrity, and a commitment to meaningful results. Her behind-the-scenes dedication is helping CIHA deliver on its mission—one consult, one prescription, and one patient at a time.