Genome Publications
https://doi.org/10.61096/978-81-994851-8-1_6

Chapter 6

Harmonizing Artificial Intelligence and Pharmacist Expertise in Pharmaceutical Production

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Abstract: Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector by enabling automation, data-driven decisions, and real-time process control. It supports critical manufacturing activities such as raw material testing, granulation, drying, compression, coating, packaging, and supply chain verification. Traditionally, pharmaceutical operations relied on conventional monitoring methods such as manual checks and periodic sampling, which required significant time and were susceptible to human error. AI introduces tools like predictive modelling, PAT, and continuous manufacturing approaches that support stronger quality outcomes and regulatory fulfillments. Importantly, AI does not replace the pharmacist; instead, it strengthens pharmacist-led decision making by aiding interpretation of large datasets, recognizing deviations, and supporting quality documentation. this chapter explores the detailed role of AI in pharmaceutical production, focusing on its need, raw material authentication, and how it supports a pharmacist-driven quality system. The discussion also highlights Pharma 4.0 standards, real-time release testing (RTRT), and data integrity principles that guide modern AI deployment in the pharmaceutical industry. (1,5-9)

Keywords: AI; Pharmacist; Pharmaceutical Production; Pharma 4.0; PAT; QbD; Continuous Manufacturing; Data Integrity; RTRT.

Citation: K. Sharon Rose, S. Harika, Mrs. A. Revathi. Harmonizing Artificial Intelligence and Pharmacist Expertise in Pharmaceutical Production. *Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Pharmacy: Execution and Exploration.* 2025; Pp55-65.
https://doi.org/10.61096/978-81-994851-8-1_6

1. INTRODUCTION

Pharmaceutical manufacturing involves multiple steps where precision, safety, and quality are essential. Each drug product must meet predefined standards for identity, strength, purity, and stability. Even small deviations in raw material quality or process conditions can result in failed batches, financial loss, and risk to patient safety. To ensure consistency and regulatory compliance, the industry follows global standards such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), the International Council for Harmonisation (ICH) guidelines, and U.S. FDA regulations. **(**1,2,3,4,5) Traditional pharmaceutical production relied heavily on manual supervision, offline analytical assessments, routine sampling, and paper-driven documentation. However, as products became more complex and manufacturing volumes increased, these manual practices became inadequate for modern production scales and complexities. The industry now generates massive data from sensors, batch records, environmental monitoring systems, spectroscopy instruments, and supply chain records. AI helps manage this complex data environment through automated surveillance systems, predictive modelling, and timely analytical decision support. AI-enabled digital transformation supports Pharma 4.0, (6,7,8,9) which represents the shift toward smart, interconnected, and automated manufacturing. The pharmacist remains central to this process. Pharmacists apply clinical and scientific knowledge to evaluate AI outcomes, confirm critical Quality attributes (CQAs), (1,2,3,8) and approve batch release Thus, AI does not replace pharmacists; rather, it enhances their ability to safeguard medicine quality and patient safety.

2. NEED FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION

The need for AI in pharmaceutical production arises from increasing manufacturing complexity and

The demand for safer, cost-effective, and time-efficient drug production systems. The pharmaceutical industry must ensure quality throughout the manufacturing lifecycle while reducing batch failures, deviations, and regulatory violations. (1,2,5,7)

AI aligns strongly with modern pharmaceutical quality frameworks, including:

- Quality by design (QBD) **(1,2)**
- Process analytical technology (PAT) **(5)**
- Continuous process verification (CPV) **(6,11)**
- Pharma 4.0 smart manufacturing **(9,18)**
- Real time release testing (RTRT) **(17)**

AI supports identification of critical material attributes (CMAs) and critical process parameters (CPPs), which directly impact product performance. Machine learning models can analyze historical and real-time data to predict failure points, optimize process settings, and maintain consistent critical quality attributes (CQAs). Through real-time assessment, AI minimizes the need for final product testing. Instead, continuous process verification ensures every stage of production remains within validated control limits, improving reliability and quality assurance. **(**7,8,10,11)

3. AI IN RAW MATERIAL HANDLING AND AUTHENTICATION

Raw materials form the foundation of pharmaceutical manufacturing. If the identity, purity, or quality of raw materials is compromised, finished product quality cannot be assured. **(2,3,5,7)** AI-enabled authentication ensures that only approved materials enter the production system. Spectroscopy, imaging technologies, and machine learning algorithms are widely used for rapid verification and counterfeit detection. **(7,10,11)**

AI tools used in raw material handling include:

- Near-Infrared spectroscopy (NIR) for chemical identity and moisture content
- Raman spectroscopy for molecular fingerprinting
- Hyperspectral imaging for API–excipient distribution
- Computer vision and OCR for barcode and labeling verification
- Machine learning models (SVM, PCA, ANN)

For spectral classification these tools allow rapid authentication without extensive chemical testing. Instead of relying solely on conventional interpretation methods, AI compares material samples with reference spectral libraries to ensure compliance to ensure compliance. This reduces testing time and prevents the entry of falsified or substituted raw materials. **(11,13,16) Pharmacists ensure** supplier qualification, material sampling, method validation, and documentation according to ICH Q7, WHO GMP, and 21 CFR Part 211. **(2,3,4,5)**

AI supports pharmacists by generating traceable digital records that follow secure electronic documentation aligned with ALCOA+ data integrity expectations (Attributable, Legible, Contemporaneous, Original, Accurate + Complete, Consistent, Enduring, Available). **(17)**

4. AI IN GRANULATION AND MIXING

Granulation is a fundamental unit operation in the manufacturing of solid oral dosage forms. It involves converting fine drug powders and excipients into larger, free-flowing granules, improving flow properties, compressibility, and content uniformity. AI plays a crucial role in optimizing this process by enabling advanced monitoring, prediction, and control of granule formation. **(14,7)**

Granulation processes used in the pharmaceutical industry include:

Type of Granulation (14)	Key Characteristics
Wet Granulation	Uses binder solution; suitable for moisture-sensitive flow improvement
Dry Granulation	Roller compaction; suitable for heat- and moisture-sensitive materials
Melt Granulation	Uses meltable binders; no water or solvent needed

Granule quality depends on factors such as:

- Binder concentration and distribution
- Impeller and chopper speed
- Wetting and nucleation time

- Granule particle size distribution
- Moisture retention and porosity **(14,11)**

AI enhances granulation productivity by:

- Continuously tracking key material attributes
- Forecasting granule-size profiles through ML models
- Automatically modulating binder application rates
- Minimizing failures associated with inadequate mixing or excessive granulation **(7,10,11,14)**

Common AI tools in granulation:

AI Technique	Application
Acoustic emission sensors	Detect wetting and granule collisions
Near-infrared (NIR) Spectroscopy	Monitors moisture and binder distribution
Digital image processing	Analyzes shape and morphology of granules
Soft sensors (ANN, SVM, PCA)	Estimate critical parameters without sampling
Digital twin simulation	Predicts batch behavior and scale-up performance

Machine learning models frequently used include:

- Random Forest (RF)
- Artificial Neural Networks (ANN)
- Principal Component Regression (PCR)
- Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) for visual morphology analysis **(11,14,15)**

Pharmacist responsibilities:

- Evaluate granulation parameters affecting CQAs (flow, density, content uniformity)
- Set acceptable ranges for CMAs and CP
- Validate AI predictions and endpoint detection
- Ensure ICH Q8 (Pharmaceutical Development) and Q9 (Quality Risk Management) compliance **(1,2,3)**

5. AI IN DRYING

Drying is an essential operation that removes residual moisture from wet granules after granulation. Proper drying ensures stability, prevents microbial growth, and enhances compressibility during tablet compression.

Drying methods commonly applied:

Drying Method	Description
Fluidized bed dryer (FBD)	Efficient hot air drying with particle suspension
Tray dryer	Heated chamber with shelf trays; slower drying
Vacuum dryer	Lower temperature drying for thermolabile substances
Microwave / infrared dryers	Rapid energy-based drying

Incorrect drying causes:

- Over-drying → brittle material and reduced compressibility
- Under-drying → sticking tendencies, microbial risks, and compromised dissolution. **(14)**

AI supports drying through:

- Predictive tools for estimating moisture profiles
- Automated recognition of drying endpoints in real time.
- Adaptive temperature and airflow control
- Energy-efficient runtime reduction **(7,10,11)**

AI uses: (11,14)

Technology	Use in Drying
NIR moisture probes	Continuous moisture measurement without sampling
Thermal cameras	Surface heat distribution mapping
LSTM neural networks	Predicts drying curve and endpoint
ANN-based soft sensors	Estimate moisture without LOD testing

Pharmacist responsibilities in drying:

- Confirm Loss on Drying (LOD) limits
- Approve moisture sensor calibration
- Review AI-generated drying trend charts
- Ensure PAT, RTRT, and CPV regulatory compliance **(1,2,5)**

6. AI IN COMPRESSION AND TABLET QUALITY MONITORING

Compression converts dried granules into tablets under high pressure. Tablet quality depends on:

- Hardness and friability
- Thickness and diameter
- Weight variation
- Disintegration and dissolution time
- Visual appearance and color

Defects include:

- Capping
- Lamination
- Chipping
- sticking/picking
- weight variation
- surface mottling or color inconsistency **(14)**

AI improves compression by:

- Tracking parameters such as turret pressure, feeder performance, and machine vibrations
- Anticipating defect formation prior to occurrence
- Adjusting compression force automatically
- Detecting broken or chipped tablets using cameras **(7,10,11)**

AI tools used: (10,13)

Technology	Application
Load cell pressure analytics	Detect compression anomalies
CNN vision inspection	Finds shape/edge/surface defects
Laser sensors	Measure thickness + weight
Predictive maintenance	Prevent tooling and punch damage

Pharmacist responsibilities:

- Ensure compliance with compendia (IP/USP/BP/EP)
- Review AI inspection data before batch release
- Validate weight variation, hardness, friability limits
- Maintain data integrity documentation **(1,2,4)**

7. AI IN COATING AND PACKAGING

Coating improves tablet stability, taste, appearance, and modifies release behavior.

Coating efficiency depends on:

- Spray rate and droplet size
- Pan/drum rotation speed
- Inlet/outlet air temperature
- Polymer and plasticizer viscosity
- Drying airflow **(14)**

AI identifies coating defects like:

- Rough or uneven surface appearance
- Inconsistent color distribution
- Edge-related peeling or cracking
- non-uniform thickness **(10,13)**

In packaging, AI ensures:

- accurate sealing, proper labeling, and robust serialization processes
- Absence of missing tablets in blister cavities
- OCR verification of expiry dates, batch codes, barcodes
- Anti-counterfeit tracking across the supply chain **(9,13,16)**

AI technologies: (13,16)

Tool	Function
Deep learning OCR	Label and expiry verification
Vision inspection cameras	Detects empty or damaged pockets
QR/blockchain serialization	Prevents counterfeit distribution
Robotic packaging arms	Improves speed and sealing quality

Pharmacists ensure packaging follows:

- 21 CFR Part 211 (USFDA)
- EU Falsified Medicines Directive (FMD)
- GS1 global serialization standards **(4,5,16)**

8. COLLABORATIVE ROLE OF PHARMACISTS AND AI IN PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence does not replace pharmacists. Instead, it strengthens the pharmaceutical quality system by offering fast data analysis, prediction models, and real-time process feedback. Pharmacists remain responsible for decision-making, regulatory compliance, and ensuring that AI systems operate ethically and safely. **(7,8,9)**

Pharmacists have expertise in:

- Clinical and pharmacological knowledge
- GMP, ICH, and regulatory frameworks
- Quality by Design (QbD) and PAT methodology
- Validation and documentation practices
- Risk assessment and deviation investigations **(1,2,3)**

AI offers strengths in:

- Fast processing of extensive and multidimensional datasets
- Anticipating failures in advance
- Continuous process surveillance without human limitations.
- Generating insights from multivariate data
- Enhancing batch consistency and reducing cost **(7,8,10)**

Key pharmacist responsibilities in AI-integrated production: (1,2,4,9)

Area	Pharmacist's Role
Model development	Review inputs, verify materials, and ensure scientific relevance
Quality risk management	Apply FMEA, HACCP, and risk prioritization
Data integrity	Ensure ALCOA+ principles
Batch release	Evaluate AI recommendations before product release

Pharmacists ensure that AI follows ethical principles including transparency, accountability, and fairness.

AI becomes a supportive tool that enhances decision quality while pharmacists remain final authority.

9. ADVANTAGES OF AI IN PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION

AI implementation offers transformative benefits across the production lifecycle. It improves product quality, reduces waste, accelerates output, and ensures regulatory alignment.

Major advantages include:

- Improved quality and reduced variability AI maintain key process and product attributes consistency in real-time, lowering batch rejection rates.
- Faster decisions are achieved as predictive models flag deviations early.
- Cost reduction and resource efficiency less material waste, shorter production time, optimized energy usage. **(6,7,8,9,17)**
- Enhanced data integrity and traceability AI automatically record manufacturing data, improving audit readiness. **(17)**

- Real-time release testing (RTRT) Products may be released based on continuous in-process monitoring rather than end-product testing.
- Better regulatory compliance supports ICH Q8, Q9, Q10, Q12, WHO GMP, and USFDA guidelines. **(2,3,4,5)**
- Safer Working environment reduces worker exposure to powder handling and toxic materials.

10. LIMITATIONS OF AI IN PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION

Despite its benefits, AI adoption has challenges that must be carefully managed.

Limitations:

- High implementation and maintenance cost Hardware, software, and training expenses may restrict smaller companies.
- Data availability and quality issues AI models require large, accurate, structured datasets.
- Risk of algorithmic bias misaligned model assumptions can generate inaccurate predictions. **(8,9)**
- Cybersecurity and data privacy threats production information requires strong protection against unauthorized breaches.
- Workforce skill gap Pharmacists and technical staff require training in AI, data science, and automation.
- Regulatory uncertainty Guidelines for AI validation and approval are still evolving. **(8,9,18)**

11. FUTURE SCOPE OF AI IN PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION

AI is expected to bring more advanced manufacturing capabilities as Pharma 4.0 evolves into Pharma 5.0, a patient-centered and sustainability-focused era. **(18)**

Future applications:

- Digital twin systems that replicate entire manufacturing plants for simulation and optimization. **(15)**
- Fully autonomous "Lights-Out" manufacturing factories running with minimal human presence.
- Self-correcting production lines AI automatically makes adjustments to maintain product quality. **(9,18)**
- Blockchain-enabled global serialization end-to-end counterfeit prevention. **(16)**
- AI-driven personalized medicine manufacturing rapid micro-batch production for individualized therapies.
- Quantum AI for faster optimization future quantum computing may drastically reduce computation time. **(20)**

12. REAL-TIME INDUSTRIAL CASE STUDIES

The adoption of AI in pharmaceutical manufacturing has accelerated globally. The following examples demonstrate real operational use.

Pfizer – AI in mRNA Vaccine Manufacturing

During large-scale COVID-19 vaccine production, Pfizer used:

- Raman spectroscopy models for lipid nanoparticle raw material verification

- AI- based analytical tools to enhance cold-chain efficiency.
- Predictive maintenance for bioreactor monitoring **(12)**

Outcome: Improved production speed and reduced material qualification time.

Novartis – AI-Supported Continuous Manufacturing

Novartis implemented:

- PAT-based inline NIR monitoring
- Moisture prediction models during continuous granulation
- Digital batch release analytics **(6)**

Outcome: 32% reduction in granulation variability and 18% shorter production cycles.

Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) – Vision Inspection in Packaging

Deployed computer vision-powered systems to detect:

- Missing tablets in blisters
- Barcode misprints
- Sealing irregularities
- Tamper-evident packaging errors **(13)**

Outcome: >40% reduction in packaging defects and mislabeling recalls.

AstraZeneca – AI-Driven Drying Process Optimization

Uses AI soft sensors to predict optimal drying endpoints and prevent over-processing of thermolabile APIs. **(14)**

Outcome: 21% reduction in drying time and improved granule flow uniformity.

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) – Serialization and Counterfeit Prevention

AI + block chain ensures:

- Serialized tracking of every shipped unit
- Anti-counterfeiting authentication at dispensing points
- Pharmacovigilance signal detection via AI mining of safety databases **(16)**

Outcome: improved supply chain security, reduced counterfeit entry, and enhanced product traceability across global markets.

Indian Pharmaceutical Industry Adoption

Company	AI Application
Cipla	MES + AI-driven EBR and deviation management (9)
Dr. Reddy's	Predictive maintenance and smart batch record review (19)
Sun Pharma	Supply chain forecasting and serialization analytics (9,16)
Biocon	Biologics manufacturing monitoring with PAT + ML (7,11)

13. CONCLUSION

Artificial Intelligence has become an essential component of modern pharmaceutical production. It enhances process control, reduces variability, supports continuous manufacturing, and strengthens pharmaceutical quality systems. Rather

than replacing pharmacists, AI empowers them with stronger analytical capabilities and better decision-making tools. (7,8,9)

As the world progresses toward Pharma 5.0 and personalized medicine, AI will continue to evolve and provide safer, faster, sustainable, and patient-centric pharmaceutical manufacturing systems. (18,20)

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