Exploring Pharmacists’ Role in a Changing Healthcare Environment

Summary

More and more, pharmacists are forging expanded roles in healthcare delivery to ensure optimal drug therapy and improve patient outcomes.

Pharmacists’ focused training in drug therapy positions them well for unique contributions to the management of patient health, especially within evolving payment and delivery models that explicitly focus on quality and efficiency.

A new analysis by Avalere Health set out to investigate the ways that pharmacist services are improving care, and how these services are aligned with the changing healthcare environment. With support from several pharmacist associations and organizations*, Avalere conducted a structured assessment of current evidence on the effects of five key pharmacist services and modalities: medication management; medication reconciliation; preventive services (screening and immunization); education and behavioral counseling; and collaborative care models. The analysis uncovered several key findings:

The body of literature continues to validate that pharmacist-provided medication management can improve health outcomes, both across a number of settings and high-spend therapeutic areas such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension. Because they manage the entirety of care for a patient, accountable care organizations (ACOs) may look to integrate pharmacist-provided medication management to improve medication adherence and clinical outcomes, while potentially reducing costs.

Pharmacist-provided medication reconciliation can help reduce medication discrepancies...
and may be an important component of improving transitions of care moving forward. Additionally, some studies suggest that through this focus on medication, pharmacists can reduce healthcare utilization and costs.

Beyond the management of medications, pharmacists have been shown to improve vaccination rates. Payers and policymakers should explore ways to leverage pharmacists’ accessibility in the community to provide **preventive care services** (immunization and screening), especially within alternative payment and delivery models such as ACOs and patient-centered medical homes (PCMHs).

Pharmacist-provided **educational and behavioral counseling** can contribute to better outcomes in chronically ill patients, and also can support broader health and wellness in the population.

Formal **collaborative care models** between pharmacists and physicians establish clear channels for pharmacists to deliver the services above with positive clinical effects. Moving forward, collaborative care models that include a pharmacist can help alleviate some of the demand for physician-provided care, and also can facilitate access to primary care services, especially those related to medication management.

As new payment and delivery models such as ACOs and PCMHs proliferate, new roles exist for pharmacists to contribute to the improvement of quality and the reduction of costs and other healthcare services. Further research evaluating pharmacist services will help define the optimal role for pharmacists as the healthcare landscape evolves.

Find the complete white paper attached.

For more information on this research, please contact Morgan Hanger at mhanger@avalere.com. For more information on how Avalere can help support your provider group, please contact Fauzea Hussein at fhussein@avalere.com.

* This research was funded by American Pharmacists Association (APhA), American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP), National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), and National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA). Avalere Health maintained full editorial control and the conclusions expressed here are those of the authors.