



Improve Patients’ Access to Pharmacist Services *Support Pharmacists’ Recognition as Providers in Medicare Part B*

Background

Pharmacists Can Help to Meet Critical Needs. Millions of Medicare beneficiaries lack adequate access to primary healthcare services, and this is only expected to increase as the number of enrollees grows. According to the AAMC, by 2030, we will face a shortage of more than 120,000 doctors. Pharmacists are uniquely positioned to help address this anticipated shortage by playing a greater role in the delivery of healthcare services in collaboration with other health care team providers.

Pharmacists have been recognized by States through their scope of practice to provide needed services to patient populations. However, while physicians and other providers are already reimbursed under Medicare Part B for providing similar services, pharmacists are not.

Pharmacists are Already Providing Services. Community pharmacists are among the advanced healthcare professionals with doctorate-level education and years of clinical training. Pharmacists’ education and training equips them to provide many services in addition to dispensing and educating patients on their medications. These services include:

- Health Tests and Screening
- Management of Chronic Conditions and Related Medications
- Point of Care Testing (e.g. Flu, Strep)
- Immunization Screening and Administration
- Transition of Care Services

Impact

Pharmacists Save Healthcare Costs. Community pharmacists reduce the costs of health care by improving patient care and collaboration among providers, optimizing medication use for improved patient outcomes, contributing to medication error prevention, and preventing hospital readmission cost-avoidance, which cost Medicare \$26 billion annually.

Pharmacists Are Accessible and Convenient. Almost 92% of 10 Americans live within 5 miles of a community pharmacy and Americans have expressed a high-level of trust in the advice and care they receive at pharmacies.

Pharmacists Are Well Positioned to Respond to Urgent Public Health Needs. Pharmacists can be better utilized to respond to immediate public health needs. For example, in the battle against the opioid crisis, pharmacists can help identify and treat those with opioid addiction. This includes providing services such as opioid antagonist counseling or opioid risk factor intervention services.

Recommendation

Soon-to-be introduced legislation will recognize pharmacists as Medicare providers for the purposes of providing much-needed opioid antagonist counseling and risk factor intervention services. This legislation will allow pharmacists to work in collaboration with other providers and play a greater role in addressing opioid abuse and misuse.

We urge you to cosponsor legislation to be introduced soon to recognize the value of pharmacists by including them as providers in Medicare and allow them to help identify and treat opioid addiction.