

Chain Pharmacies and Pharmacists Provide Convenient, Accessible and Cost-Effective Healthcare Services to Americans

For generations, Americans have relied on their local, community pharmacists to meet their healthcare needs – trusted, highly accessible healthcare providers deeply committed to providing accurate prescriptions and helping patients take medications as prescribed. The full value of pharmacy is broader in scope, however. Pharmacies and pharmacists are being recognized for their abilities to provide high-quality healthcare services at an overall lower cost.

Pharmacies are Accessible: NACDS' member chain community pharmacies are accessible, patient-centered healthcare destinations. Nine out of 10 Americans live within five miles of a community pharmacy and Americans have expressed a high-level of trust in the advice and care they receive at pharmacies. One study of a high-risk Medicaid population found that patients visited their pharmacies 35 times per year, compared to seeing their primary care doctors 4 times per year, and specialists 9 times per year. Voters agree:

- **83% of voters say that pharmacies are easy to access**
- **80% of voters have visited a pharmacy in the past twelve months**

Pharmacies are Innovative: Not only do pharmacist interventions improve patient health and outcomes, but also pharmacy care has been shown to save downstream health care dollars. As the demand for healthcare services continues to grow pharmacists have expanded their role in healthcare delivery, partnering with physicians, nurses, and other healthcare providers to meet their patients' needs. Increasingly, pharmacies provide vaccinations, health education, point of care and disease-state testing and disease management, and medication synchronization. These types of innovative pharmacist services help avoid more costly forms of care and help improve patient quality of life. Voters agree:

- **2 in 3 voters support allowing Medicare enrollees to receive basic healthcare services from their pharmacists**
- **75% of voters support enhancing patient access to newer pharmacy services such as vaccinations, testing for flu and strep, and helping patients manage diseases such as diabetes**

Pharmacies save Healthcare Dollars: Pharmacists help patients identify strategies to save money, such as understanding their pharmacy benefits, using generic drugs, and obtaining 90-day supplies of prescription drugs from local pharmacies.

Healthcare spending on non-optimal medication therapy (estimated at \$528.4 billion per year) and medication non-adherence (estimated at \$100-290 billion per year and attributed to 10% of hospitalizations) could be significantly decreased with the development of policies and programs that leverage patient touchpoints in the community setting and that fully utilize the skillset of community pharmacists. Medications are the primary intervention to treat chronic disease and are involved in 80% of all treatment regimens, yet medication management services are poorly integrated into existing healthcare systems.

Moreover, vital to realizing the full value pharmacists can have on improving patient health and reducing overall health care costs will be the expansion and the alignment of incentives to include community pharmacists in value-based models of care. Successful outcomes for value-based models and other coordinated care programs will be dependent on ensuring multiple provider types are able to provide disease state management, medication management, and preventive services to beneficiaries.

Voters agree:

- **7 in 10 voters view pharmacists as credible sources for information on saving money on prescription drugs**
- **79% of voters approve a new bipartisan law that allows pharmacists to tell consumers about less expensive prescription options – with 66% strongly approving (i.e., eliminating the “pharmacy gag clause”)**
- **86% of voters support pharmacists using their expertise to identify other opportunities that can help lower patients’ out-of-pocket costs – with 66% strongly supporting**
- **71% of voters are more likely to support a Congressional candidate who reduces out-of-pocket prescription drug and healthcare costs by acting on recommendations from pharmacists and other healthcare providers**
- **66% of voters are more likely to support a Congressional candidate who helps advance policies that increase access to basic healthcare services by allowing pharmacists and other healthcare professionals to better use their education and training**

Pharmacies Help Solve Healthcare Problems: When addressing our nation’s opioid epidemic, voters are most likely to understand that pharmacists are part of the solution, rather than the problem. This is a distinction that pharmacists share with law enforcement. For example:

- **65% of voters support allowing pharmacists to work with Medicare patients to help prevent, detect or treat potential opioid abuse (17% oppose; 28% don’t know/no opinion)**
- **61% of voters support requiring that all prescriptions be issued and handled electronically to reduce fraud and abuse (19% oppose; 20% don’t know/no opinion)**
- **58% of voters support limiting the initial fill of certain opioid prescriptions to a seven-day supply to reduce the incidence of addiction and abuse (24% oppose; 28% don’t know/no opinion)**

Pharmacies and pharmacists are integral to our nation’s healthcare system. They are among the most accessible healthcare providers and provide high-quality healthcare services that are not only lower cost, but also prevent more costly downstream healthcare services. Pharmacists are highly trusted among Americans.