

Improving Medication Use Lowering Health Care Costs

Our Nation's Medication Use Problem

Medications are the first line of defense and have been proven to be our most important weapon in the fight against all disease, including chronic diseases like diabetes and coronary heart disease. Unfortunately, improper medication use has been estimated to cost our nation \$177 billion annually in total direct and indirect healthcare costs.¹ Poor adherence to medications causes approximately 125,000 deaths each year, and costs at least \$75.6 billion annually.²

A 2007 Milken Institute Report showed that the cost of treating the top seven chronic diseases was \$277 billion. The impact of lost workdays and lower productivity resulted in an annual economic loss in the U.S. of over \$1 trillion for 2003. Furthermore, the report states that reasonable improvements in preventing and managing chronic disease could reduce the economic costs of disease in the U.S. by 27% or \$1.1 trillion. (\$905 billion from gains in productivity and \$218 billion from reduced treatment spending.)

Proven Solutions: Successful Medication Therapy Management Programs

Pharmacists' medication expertise is often required for patients to fully optimize their medication therapy. Several public and private sector programs such as the Asheville Project³, the Diabetes Ten City Challenge⁴, and the Veterans Administration have effectively utilized pharmacist clinical services in collaborative care models that have resulted in improved health outcomes, reduced overall healthcare costs, and increased productivity Medication therapy management services:

- Increase the likelihood to meet desired health outcomes.
- Improve medication management, including compliance.
- Increase prevention and wellness activities (health screenings, immunizations).
- Reduce hospital readmissions due to medication misuse.
- Improve care for patients transitioning between care settings.

The American Pharmacists Association's Health Care Reform Recommendations

Regardless of how you finance or expand coverage, we must take advantage of this health reform opportunity to improve the quality of care and lower health care costs. Improved care and lowered costs cannot be fully achieved without addressing our nation's medication use crisis. Now is the time to optimize the clinical expertise and accessibility of pharmacists – the medication experts on the health care team – to empower patients to manage their medication therapy.

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