

Implications for Policymakers, Health Plan Sponsors and Other Stakeholders



With Americans receiving an average grade of “C+” when it comes to properly taking their prescription medications, according to *Medication Adherence in America: A National Report Card*, there is much room for improvement. Pharmacists stand ready to help achieve better outcomes and lower health care costs through medication adherence solutions.

Awareness

Pharmacist-provided adherence services offer many benefits to health plan sponsors, government agencies, and other public and private payers focused on quality in the health care system. Pharmacists can help reduce the estimated costs of improper medication use, estimated to be as much as \$290 billion annually.¹

Access

NCPA encourages policymakers and payers to preserve patients’ choice to select a pharmacy option that works best for them. The report card identifies pharmacy connectedness (the pharmacy “knows you pretty well”) as the leading predictor of medication adherence. Patients of independent community pharmacies reported the highest level of personal connection (89 percent agreeing that the pharmacist or staff “knows you pretty well”), followed by large chains (67 percent) and mail order (36 percent).

So-called preferred pharmacy networks and financially incentivized mail order services rob patients of the ability to build and maintain a relationship with their local community pharmacist, who can work with them to understand the benefits and importance of their medications.

Aligned Incentives with Payers

Third-party payment policies that restrict or deter pharmacies from enrolling patients in personalized adherence programs are short-sighted. Policies that stymie pharmacist efforts to consolidate and coordinate patients’ refill schedules as part of a medication synchronization program are inconsistent with the overall goal of promoting better care and improved outcomes.

Additionally, quality measurement metrics must look at the correlation between appropriate medication use and medical outcomes. Medication adherence is about more than just fill rates; it’s about connecting with patients and helping them achieve better health outcomes by ensuring they are taking their medication appropriately.

Public Policies to Improve Medication Adherence:

- Congress should enact bipartisan legislation (the Medication Therapy Management Empowerment Act, H.R. 1024/S. 557) to improve medication adherence among Medicare beneficiaries. These bills would expand the pool of patients who qualify for medication therapy management (MTM) programs, increasing one-on-one medication counseling from trusted pharmacists and ensuring that more seniors are taking their medication properly and safely.
- States should adopt legislation that gives patients a choice in pharmacy services and prevents them from being forced into mandatory mail order plans.
- Plan sponsors should support access for patients and caregivers to the pharmacy that best meets their individual needs.
- Payers should not rely solely on fill rates as an indicator of quality as these metrics can produce unnecessary waste and costs to the health care system.
- Payers should remove existing barriers and encourage greater adoption of medication synchronization services as a standard of care.

The National Report Card on Adherence’s findings can be accessed at www.ncpanet.org/reportcard.

¹ “Thinking Outside The Pillbox: A System-wide Approach to Improving Patient Adherence for Chronic Disease.” NEHL. 2009.