New Report Highlights Importance of Pharmacists in Addressing Physician Shortage

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Wisconsin has made progress in addressing the projected shortage of physicians in the state within the next two decades by incorporating team-based care and recognizing the important role of pharmacists, according to a new report released by the Wisconsin Council on Medical Education and Workforce (WCMEW).

The report predicts a shortage of as many as 3,756 physicians by 2035, due to an aging population, the increasing complexity of healthcare, and a change in physician demographics. By moving to a team-based care model, Wisconsin will be better suited to fill the physician gap, particularly with the expanding role of pharmacists.

Through partnerships with physicians, pharmacists are able to perform tasks that were once a physician-only role with delegation protocols and collaborative practice agreements. For example, Wisconsin law already allows pharmacists, using clinical knowledge, to administer vaccinations and non-vaccine injections and convert prescription refill amounts without physician authorization. Pharmacists are also providing comprehensive medication reviews, operating within delegation protocols between community-based pharmacies and primary care clinics, ordering labs and monitoring medications for patients with chronic conditions within specialty clinics and managing quality care transitions, all while optimizing medication use. With pharmacists’ expanded roles, physicians report care efficiencies and increased satisfaction in their work.

While more work will be necessary to address the impending crisis, PSW looks forward to continuing their work with WCMEW. Allowing pharmacists to provide additional immunizations, implementing statewide standing orders for medication dispensing, and expanding pharmacy technician roles will allow pharmacists to take on a broader role in patient care.