



HCR checklist:

What you need to do NOW!

- ❑ **From last month:** You initiated contacts with Members of Congress so they can visit your practice setting, watched for votes of key committees as well as the full House and Senate, and invited colleagues and patients to join the growing chorus of voices calling for MTM services in the health care reform legislation.
- ❑ **Communicate with Congress!** Contact Members' offices—either locally or in Washington—in person, by phone, or via e-mail; and set up visits to your pharmacy practice setting. Your interactions with key Senators and Representatives could make the difference! Details about communications are available in the Government Affairs section of pharmacist.com.
- ❑ **Let APhA know what you've done!** Send an e-mail message to gvtaff@aphanet.org when you've made contact with Members or hosted them in your pharmacy.
- ❑ **Join!** When APhA goes to Capitol Hill to present pharmacy's positions, aides and Members want to know how many members we have. There's strength in numbers. If your membership in your national professional society is not current, go to pharmacist.com and join today. Your professional future will be all the better for it.
- ❑ **Use social media to stay connected!** Become a fan of Pharmacists in Health Care Reform on Facebook (facebook.com/HealthCareReform). Follow APhA's 'tweets' on HCR through APhA's Twitter Feed (twitter.com/APhA_HCR). Or log on to pharmacist.com and join APhA's Linked In Group, HCR e-community or subscribe to APhA's RSS feed on HCR. Also, stay tuned for the CEO Blog that launches on pharmacist.com in July. Watch the medium of your choice carefully so that you'll be ready to act when things get critical in conference committee.



HUB ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

provides readers with practical information on health care reform issues, what APhA is doing to keep pharmacists' important role front and center with decision makers, and simple ways for pharmacists to participate in the processes that will determine the structure, function, and processes of a reformed American health care system. To offer suggestions for future content, ask questions, or make comments, send an e-mail message to APhA at gvtaff@aphanet.org.

hub on health care reform

Congress: Pharmacy's message being heard

August will be an important month in the health care reform (HCR) process that has consumed Congress—and APhA—for several months now. Members of Congress will return to their home states and districts at the end of July, and when they convene again after Labor Day, citizens will have given them much feedback on what changes are needed in the nation's health system. Pharmacy's destiny, as defined in the HCR legislation that President Barack Obama has said he wants to sign by year's end, could hang in the balance.

Initial signs have been largely positive, with pharmacists included and medication therapy management (MTM) mentioned prominently in early drafts of bills. By the time you read this, bills could be headed for votes on the floor of the Senate and the House of Representatives. If you want to be sure that your Members of Congress return to the nation's capital thinking about pharmacy and all that MTM can do for patients, August is your last, best opportunity to meet face to face with your Senator and Representative, whether that is in forums set up by others, in meetings at district offices, or during visits to your pharmacy. Follow the links on pharmacist.com/GA to get information on the process and purpose of such contacts, and make sure that pharmacy and MTM are included when the President signs HCR legislation later this year.

On the Hill: Academy leaders advocate for pharmacy

The message of what pharmacists can and should be doing in a reformed health

care system was delivered loud and clear on the afternoon of June 5 as 32 leaders in APhA's three academies stormed Capitol Hill. Connecting with congressional staff in the offices of 48 Senators and Representatives, pharmacists in Washington for the annual APhA Academies Leadership Meeting (ALM) emphasized several core messages:

- America has a medication-use crisis.
- Pharmacists are the medication experts on the health care team and are the professionals best educated, equipped, and available to address the problems.
- Studies, programs, and demonstration projects have consistently shown that pharmacists in a broad array of practice settings can deliver cost-effective care while improving patient outcomes.

One of the pharmacists delivering this message was Molly Ekstrand, BPharm, of Fairview Pharmacy Services in Minneapolis, who provides MTM services at General Mills world headquarters and two Fairview primary care clinics in Minneapolis and St. Paul. A 1996 graduate of the University of Minnesota, Ekstrand was inculcated with the principles of pharmaceutical care by Strand, Cipolle, and the other well-known proponents of this way of practicing pharmacy who teach there. During nearly 8 years with Walgreens following graduation, she developed a pharmaceutical care practice within her busy chain location, helping patients with their medication-use problems and assisting them in managing their chronic conditions.



Molly Ekstrand, BPharm (far left), listens to a presentation with other members of the APhA-APPM Community Ambulatory Practice Section: Kristin Weitzel, PharmD, CDE; Stuart Beatty, PharmD; Brenna Button-Neumann, PharmD; and Sarah A. Parnapy, PharmD.

Under an agreement with Medication Management Systems, Ekstrand began seeing General Mills employees and dependents in January 2009, and she had consulted with about 50 patients at the time of the ALM visits.

The messages delivered by this young Minnesota pharmacist certainly got through when she met on Capitol Hill with staff of representatives from her district and the one in which General Mills is located. Is Ekstrand's MTM approach to care also being noticed at General Mills? Consider what the company's Chair and CEO Kendall Powell, told a White House breakout on health care reform in March: "No one understands these medications. They are too complex. We have white collar, professional, highly educated people at General Mills who do not know how to follow their meds. And so what we're doing now—again on this prevention tack—is we're sitting them down with a pharmacist. For as long as they need to, to understand what they're taking, why, the consequences of withdrawal, all the interactions. And, again, it makes a huge difference in the management of chronic disease."



Meeting with Barbara McCallahan, an aide to Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) were (l. to r.): Paul A Schiavi, BPharm, MBA, Rite Aid Pharmacy, Assistant Professor, Clinical Department of Pharmacy Practice, Wayne State University Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy Health Sciences (WSU), APhA Key Advocate; Claire Lee, PharmD Candidate 2011, WSU, APhA-ASP Member, APhA Advocacy Key Contact; Karen Mankowski, BPharm, Vice President Rite Aid Corporation; and Effie Steele, BPharm, Rite Aid Pharmacist, Clinical Service Trainer, Diabetes Specialist, Certified Immunization Pharmacist, Adjunct Professor, WSU.

At home: Pharmacists host MTM-oriented visits

APhA members across America have been busy for months contacting and meeting with Members of Congress and their HCR staff members. A good example of an effective pharmacy visit comes from the Rite Aid Pharmacy in the Detroit suburb of Troy, MI, where Barbara McCallahan, an aide to Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), recently learned about pharmacy, 21st century style.

Paul A. Schiavi, BPharm, MBA, a faculty member in the Wayne State University

Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences who also practices at Rite Aid, spearheaded the visit. Stabenow is a member of the Senate Finance Committee that led the way in drafting HCR legislation and a key opinion leader in this arena, having created the Health Care People's Lobby and introduced several pieces of legislation affecting pharmacy and medication therapy.

Schiavi, other Wayne State and Rite Aid pharmacists, local operations and pharmacy vice presidents of the chain, and a student pharmacist provided demonstrations for many of the most progressive aspects of today's practice of pharmacy. The Rite Aid facility was designed for providing MTM services, and the pharmacists used the setting to explain in detail to McCallahan how pharmacists are involved in wellness efforts—including immunization, hypertension, and diabetes screening services. The group listed the components of the MTM process as it is provided to both Medicare Part D beneficiaries and other patients. Also covered were Chronic Disease Management Care (diabetes, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder) and Medication Compliance Programs for patients. Schiavi, an APhA-certified OTC Self-Care Advisor, touched on what community pharmacists contribute to patient care as part of their daily practice.

Greg Baran, Director of Governmental Affairs for the Michigan Pharmacists Association, participated in the visit, sharing with McCallahan information on other issues, including the difficulties faced by pharmacists when patients obtain their medications from several different brick-and-mortar and mail-service pharmacies.

While the visit was scheduled to last 30 minutes, McCallahan spent a full hour and a half learning about the new face of pharmacy. At the end, she shared with the group her view that pharmacists will have a strong role in HCR legislation. The profession is being underused, she noted, and pharmacists need to play a key role in improving health care overall and controlling costs specifically.

APhA continues to emphasize the importance of pharmacists and their patients contacting Members of Congress, visiting staff in district offices, and as in this case, hosting the Senators and Representatives, or their key staff members, to demonstrate MTM during pharmacy visits. The month of August provides a great

opportunity for pharmacists to host Members, as Congress is out of session from the end of July through Labor Day. Use the resources in the Government Affairs section of pharmacist.com to set up your visit!

Other voices: Noteworthy support emerges for MTM

When Members of Congress hear about MTM, is the message being delivered by pharmacists? Most of the time, yes, that's true, but support for pharmacy and MTM has emerged during the HCR debate from a wide variety of sources. Consider the following quotes:

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...Pharmacists were most likely to prevent the errors from reaching the patients (40 percent of intercepted medication errors), while physicians and patients were almost equally likely to intercept the medication error (19 percent and 17 percent of intercepted errors, respectively).”

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ): AHRQ February 2009 Research accessed May 4, 2009 at http://www.highperformancepharmacy.com/pdf/case_studies/263.pdf

“We need to build on the examples of outstanding medicine at places like the Cincinnati Children's Hospital, where the quality of care for cystic fibrosis patients shot up after the hospital began incorporating suggestions from parents. And places like Tallahassee Memorial Health Care, where deaths were dramatically reduced with rapid response teams that monitored patients' conditions and 'multidisciplinary rounds' with everyone from physicians to pharmacists.”

President Barack Obama, speaking on June 15, 2009, to the annual conference of the American Medical Association, Chicago.

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Such support for pharmacy is critical, APhA Foundation Executive Director/CEO William M. Ellis told the *Hub*. “We have spent much of the past decade and a half building a model for patient-centered pharmacy practice and proving that it can be scaled up. To have regulators, employers, providers, health professionals, and most of all, patients out there advocating on our behalf is really powerful.”

You can support this effort by encouraging your patients and opinion leaders in your community to join in the chorus that Congress is now hearing. Ideas and tools are available on pharmacist.com to stimulate your thinking and guide you through the process in this regard.