



Pharmacy's Top Issue: Pharmacist Provider Status

PHARMACY'S TOP ISSUE:

- **Authorize pharmacists as providers in Medicare Part B by adding pharmacists and pharmacists' patient care services to section 1861(s) of the Social Security Act.**

WHAT IS PROVIDER STATUS?

- **Pharmacists' patient care services:** Pharmacists and pharmacists' patient care services are not included in key sections of the Social Security Act (SSA), which determines eligibility for health care programs such as Medicare Part B, where physicians' and other health care professionals' outpatient services are covered. This limits Medicare beneficiaries' access to pharmacists' services in the outpatient setting and pharmacists' contributions to improving medication and health outcomes. Other health care professionals who are listed as providers in Part B of the SSA include, but is not limited to, physicians, physician's assistants, certified nurse practitioners, qualified psychologists, clinical social workers, certified nurse midwives, and certified registered nurse anesthetists.
- **Fully utilizing pharmacists' expertise and training:** Pharmacists' services have grown well beyond functions tied only to dispensing medications. Many pharmacists also provide medication management, comprehensive medication reviews with ongoing medication monitoring, chronic disease management, disease education, care transition services, prevention and wellness services, and patient education. For patients to achieve the maximum benefit of their medications, pharmacists must be included as providers on the health care team.

WHY IS PROVIDER STATUS IMPORTANT?

- There is solid [evidence](#) in dozens of studies over a decade demonstrating that having a pharmacist fully engaged as part of the health care team improves quality, improves access to care, enhances medication management and substantially reduces health care costs. Adding a pharmacist to the team also improves patient [satisfaction](#) with care, and the burden of care pharmacists can provide reduces stress on other members of the team who are struggling in our current environment.
- Treatment of chronic conditions costs the U.S. health care system trillions of dollars annually. Even marginal improvements in chronic disease management through the appropriate use of medications would result in substantial savings throughout the health care system and improve patient outcomes.

WHY NOW?

- The COVID-19 pandemic led to unprecedented recognition of pharmacists in expanding access to critical patient care services through a series of nationwide emergency authorizations by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
- Among other services, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) authorized pharmacists to provide telehealth services under direct physician supervision using real-time audio and video technology, and pharmacists working in Medicare-enrolled and accredited diabetes self-management training (DSMT) programs to deliver DSMT services via telehealth during the Public Health Emergency.
- Pharmacists have demonstrated their value while playing a crucial role in COVID-19 pandemic response by being available and accessible as front-line health care professionals. Besides medication expert services, pharmacists are providing COVID-19 testing and vaccines to Americans across the country.
- Pharmacists are trusted and accessible in all corners of the country, notably in rural and underserved communities, where the pharmacist is sometimes the only link to healthcare. Pharmacists are well equipped to address patient health disparities. Ninety percent of Americans live within 5 miles of a pharmacy and pharmacists are the health care professionals Americans see on a consistent and regular basis.