Questions to Consider When Expanding Pharmacy-based Patient Care Services

American Pharmacists Association

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Questions to Consider When Expanding Pharmacy-based Patient Care Services

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Introduction
Starting a new pharmacist patient care service requires careful planning to develop the infrastructure for success. This planning begins well before patients are enrolled in the service and even before the pharmacist chooses what type of services to provide. This document is intended to provide key questions for pharmacists and their teams to consider as they develop new patient care services.

The answers to the key questions will vary based on the service, practice, team members, patient needs, and many other factors. Because of this, answers to the questions are not provided. However, there are many resources available through APhA and other organizations that may give insight into best practices or more information about how to answer these questions. Additionally, some questions may not relate to your specific situation. When approaching a question, first ask if the question applies before spending time, energy, and effort trying to answer it.

Finally, it is recommended that you ask whether there are other questions your team should be considering about the service you will be providing. This document offers a good start but may not be comprehensive of all factors relevant to your practice, service, or specific circumstance. Connecting with peers and others in the pharmacy profession can offer a way to understand additional considerations that will be important as you begin your new patient care service.
Questions to Consider

Assess the Need for Patient Care Services

A primary driver of the success of a specific service is the ability to match the personal interests and skills of pharmacy staff, the health care needs of the pharmacy’s patient base and the more extended community, and the priorities of potential health care provider and payer partners. Conducting a market assessment helps the practice determine the needs of patients, providers, local employers, and payers. Evaluating the gaps between the current level of services being provided and the desired services of stakeholders is key. This information serves as the foundation on which additional patient care services should be based. Key questions to consider in conducting a market assessment include:

➤ What types of medications do you fill the most in your pharmacy?
➤ What conditions/disease states are most prevalent in the patients at your pharmacy?
➤ What conditions/disease states are most prevalent in the community around your pharmacy?
➤ What type of challenges or questions routinely arise with patients in your pharmacy that could be mitigated by providing additional services?
➤ What services are other pharmacies/health care providers in your surrounding area providing?
➤ Are there providers in your surrounding area who would be interested in collaborating and referring patients to you for patient care services? If yes, for which conditions/services?
➤ What gaps/needs do these providers have that could be addressed through services provided by pharmacists?
➤ What payer types are prevalent in your practice?
➤ Are there any payers interested in compensating your pharmacy for providing services? If so, for what type(s) of services?
➤ How much extra time are most patients willing to spend receiving services from the pharmacist?
➤ What services are the pharmacists and pharmacy team in your practice excited about providing to patients?
➤ What impact will services have on public health and patient access to care?
➤ What technology do your patients have access to that could be used for telepharmacy/telehealth/remote monitoring?
➤ Based on the information gathered, what services would be good to target and what patients would likely access those services?
Determine Scope of Practice & Pharmacist Authority
As the practice of pharmacy continues to evolve, laws and regulations also continue to advance. During the planning phase for patient care services, it is important that pharmacists understand applicable state legal authority. Pharmacists should contact their state boards of pharmacy with specific questions about authority/scope of practice. Contact information for state board of pharmacy representatives can be accessed at https://nabp.pharmacy/boards-of-pharmacy/. Key questions that should be answered before deciding to provide a service include:

➤ Do pharmacists have the authority to provide the patient care service under the state scope of practice act?
➤ Does the Board of Pharmacy require any additional training or education prior to the pharmacist delivering the service?
➤ Does the Board of Pharmacy require pharmacists to register, attain a special license, or submit any forms prior to delivering the patient care service?
➤ Are there any limitations to how a student pharmacist, pharmacy technician, or other pharmacy staff can participate or assist in service delivery?
➤ What is the state scope of practice related to collaborative practice agreements, statewide protocols, or standing orders?
  ➤ How would collaborative practice agreements, statewide protocols, or standing orders facilitate care delivery for the patient care service, if at all?
  ➤ What new partnerships or collaborations would need to be created to deliver services under an expanded scope of practice?

Design a Business Model
For any patient care service to be successfully implemented, it must be financially viable. Pharmacists cannot sustain delivery of patient care services unless there is payment associated with those services; therefore, the business model and the patient care service model are inextricably linked.

➤ What benefit(s) does the pharmacy seek to gain by providing the service (e.g., financial, good will, patient loyalty/satisfaction)?
➤ What payment models currently exist for the service?
  ➤ Do Medicare, Medicaid, or private sector payers pay pharmacists providing the service(s)?
  ➤ Are the payment models fee-for-service or value-based?
  ➤ Do the payment models require the pharmacist to formally partner with another entity/prescriber to garner payment (e.g. incident to billing)?
➤ Who will be the payer? Health plans, employers, physicians, patients, others?
➤ Does the payer currently accept claims from pharmacies/pharmacists?
➤ What are the billing procedures and what claims processing information does the payer require?
➤ Are there any other payer requirements (e.g., prior authorization, specific submission instructions) of which the pharmacy should be aware?
Questions to Consider When Expanding Pharmacy-based Patient Care Services

- What is the process for contracting with the payer for pharmacists’ services?
- What are the payer’s credentialing requirements?
- How will return on investment for the pharmacy and other stakeholders (e.g., other providers, payers) be determined?

Define Service Provision Using the Pharmacists’ Patient Care Process

All patient care services should be delivered using the Pharmacists’ Patient Care Process (Figure 1). In the Pharmacists’ Patient Care Process, pharmacists use a patient-centered approach in collaboration with other providers on the health care team and the patient to optimize patient health and medication outcomes. An essential first step is the establishment of a patient-pharmacist relationship that supports engagement and effective communication with patients, families, and other caregivers throughout the process. At the core of the process, pharmacists continually collaborate, document, and communicate with physicians, other pharmacists, and other health care professionals in the provision of safe, effective, and coordinated care. This process is enhanced through the use of interoperable information technology systems that facilitate efficient and effective communication among all individuals involved in patient care. Table 1 details the steps of the Pharmacists’ Patient Care Process and questions to consider at each step.

**FIGURE 1.** Joint Commission of Pharmacy Practitioners Pharmacists’ Patient Care Process
### TABLE 1 – Pharmacists’ Patient Care Process Steps with Questions to Consider

**Collect**
The pharmacist assures the collection of the necessary subjective and objective information about the patient to understand the relevant medical/medication history and clinical status of the patient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This process includes collecting:</th>
<th>Questions to Consider:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ A current medication list and medication use history for prescription and nonprescription medications, herbal products, and other dietary supplements</td>
<td>▶ What patient information is needed to provide the patient care service?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Relevant health data that may include medical history, health and wellness information, biometric test results, and physical assessment findings</td>
<td>▶ What are the information/data sources for patient information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Patient lifestyle habits, preferences and beliefs, health and functional goals, and socioeconomic factors that affect access to medications and other aspects of care</td>
<td>▶ How will the pharmacy team collect information about the patient’s care that may not be readily available in existing systems?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ During which parts of the care delivery will collecting information be a key component?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Who will collect each component of information needed to deliver the service?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▶ How will information that is collected be recorded for future use?</td>
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**Assess**
The pharmacist assesses the information collected and analyzes the clinical effects of the patient’s therapy in the context of the patient’s overall health goals to identify and prioritize problems and achieve optimal care.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>This process includes assessing:</th>
<th>Questions to Consider:</th>
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<tr>
<td>▶ Each medication for appropriateness, effectiveness, safety, and patient adherence</td>
<td>▶ What resources will be helpful to the pharmacist as they assess patient information?</td>
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<tr>
<td>▶ Health and functional status, risk factors, health data, cultural factors, health literacy, and access to medications or other aspects of care</td>
<td>▶ How will the pharmacist determine the patient’s health goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Immunization status and the need for preventive care and other health care services, where appropriate</td>
<td>▶ Are there any clinical decision support tools that will help the pharmacist prioritize the care that can be delivered?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▶ How will the assessment be documented by the pharmacist?</td>
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**Plan**
The pharmacist develops an individualized patient-centered care plan, in collaboration with other health care professionals and the patient or caregiver that is evidence-based and cost-effective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This process includes establishing a care plan that:</th>
<th>Questions to Consider:</th>
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<tr>
<td>▶ Addresses medication-related problems and optimizes medication therapy</td>
<td>▶ How will the pharmacist collaborate with the patient or caregiver and other health care team members in the development of the care plan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Sets goals of therapy for achieving clinical outcomes in the context of the patient’s overall health care goals and access to care</td>
<td>▶ How will the pharmacist document the care plan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Engages the patient through education, empowerment, and self-management</td>
<td>▶ How will the care plan be shared with the patient and members of the health care team during development and once finalized, if appropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Supports care continuity, including follow-up and transitions of care as appropriate</td>
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Implement
The pharmacist implements the care plan in collaboration with other health care professionals and the patient or caregiver

During the process of implementing the care plan, the pharmacist:
▶ Addresses medication- and health-related problems and engages in preventive care strategies, including vaccine administration
▶ Initiates, modifies, discontinues, or administers medication therapy as authorized
▶ Provides education and self-management training to the patient or caregiver
▶ Contributes to coordination of care, including the referral or transition of the patient to another health care professional
▶ Schedules follow-up care as needed to achieve goals of therapy

Questions to Consider:
▶ Who on the team will be responsible for implementing parts of the care plan?
▶ How will implementation activities be documented?
▶ How will the pharmacist communicate with the patient and health care practitioners?
▶ At what points in the workflow will the care plan be implemented?
▶ How will workflow change based on the type of activities within the care plan?
▶ What processes will be used to schedule follow-up and send reminders to the patient?

Follow-Up: Monitor & Evaluate
The pharmacist monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the care plan and modifies the plan in collaboration with other health care professionals and the patient or caregiver as needed.

This process includes the continuous monitoring and evaluation of:
▶ Medication appropriateness, effectiveness, and safety and patient adherence through available health data, biometric test results, and patient feedback
▶ Clinical endpoints that contribute to the patient’s overall health
▶ Outcomes of care, including progress toward or the achievement of goals of therapy

Questions to Consider:
▶ How will the pharmacy staff know that follow-up is due?
▶ What processes will be implemented to track patient progress between visits to the pharmacy (e.g. finalizing recommendations to physicians, etc.)?
▶ How will the pharmacist track and document progress toward clinical goals?
▶ How will outcomes from services delivered be tracked?
Create an Implementation Plan

In addition to determining how the service will be delivered, you will need to consider what is required from a practice management perspective to make the new service implementation a success. An implementation plan lays out the details of who the key stakeholders are, what the goals and timeline for implementation will be, the key resources that will be needed, how the service will be marketed, and other factors that will help all stakeholders align their efforts during service launch.

➤ **Identify Implementation Team Members**
  - Who are the key implementation stakeholders?
  - Who will serve as the champions for implementation (e.g. pharmacist, other healthcare provider(s), technician champions, compliance officer)?
  - Who are the decision makers who will approve workflow, implementation, and operations?
  - What type of support is needed from administrators, pharmacy management, and other organizational departments (e.g. IT, legal, billing/coding) to make the implementation successful?
  - What roles will pharmacy technicians, student pharmacists, pharmacy residents, and administrative staff play?

➤ **Set Timeline and Goals**
  - What are the SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, time-bound) goals for the new service?
  - What are the key milestones by which the service will be measured to evaluate success?
  - How many patients will you aim to engage in the service over time?
  - How frequently will you check on your progress toward goals and the timeline?
  - Who will be responsible for monitoring progress?
  - What is the process for updating timelines and goals as implementation takes place?

➤ **Determine Practice Infrastructure Needs**
  - How will the team determine resource allocation for implementing the service?
  - What resources are needed to optimize workflow?
  - What are the physical space requirements needed to provide the service?
  - Are there technology modifications or upgrades that would facilitate care and documentation?
  - What type of insurance will the pharmacy or care team need to be protected from liability?
  - What accreditation(s) are needed by the site to meet payer requirements or indicate an advanced level of patient care (e.g. CPPA, URAC, ADA, AADE)?
Plan Marketing Efforts

➤ By what mechanisms will you market and notify providers, patients, and the community that there are new services available?
➤ How frequently will you reach out to providers and patients with information about the new service?
➤ Are there certain terms or approaches the pharmacy team should use to explain the service and its benefits so it is easy to understand?

Develop Policies and Procedures for Service Delivery

It is essential for policies and procedures to be developed so all team members are aware of how the services will be established and operated. This will likely include service delivery policies and procedures, workflow procedures, the roles of each pharmacy team member, and patient and documentation forms. Transparency and open communication with stakeholders are essential as the implementation plan is created.

➤ How can the workflow be documented to clearly describe the patient experience and the role of each team member?
➤ What policies and procedures are needed to ensure patient safety, mitigate risk, and provide consistent, efficient, effective care? Examples of areas that policies and procedures could address include:
   ➤ Processes for aspects of service delivery (e.g. protocols, treatment algorithms).
   ➤ Roles and responsibilities of staff members.
   ➤ Processes for credentialing and privileging pharmacists.
   ➤ Required education, training, and knowledge.
   ➤ Patient informed consent process.
   ➤ Patient rights, including privacy and confidentiality.
   ➤ Patient care service documentation.
   ➤ Record retention policy.
   ➤ Adverse drug reactions reporting process.
   ➤ Medication handling and management (as applicable).
   ➤ Billing instructions.
   ➤ Provider notification/follow-up.
   ➤ Referrals to/from other providers.
   ➤ Quality assurance procedures.
   ➤ Documentation processes to track quality metrics.
➤ What types of standardized forms, documentation, or communication templates should be developed?
Assure Patient Privacy and Confidentiality

With any patient care service, patients have a right to expect that their privacy and confidentiality are respected and preserved. As outlined in the Code of Ethics for Pharmacists, privacy and confidentiality are core tenets of pharmacy practice, and pharmacists must always comply with laws associated with privacy and confidentiality. Attaining and documenting consent, providing a secure and judgment-free environment with adequate privacy, and being careful about what and how information is shared are all components of effective pharmacists’ patient care services.

➤ How will patient consent for services be obtained, documented, and updated?
➤ How will the location where services are provided be configured to ensure patient privacy?
➤ How will the pharmacy team know who is authorized to receive information and initiate communications about the patient’s care (e.g. family members, caregivers)?
➤ Does the service create any unique patient privacy issues that may not have arisen with previously delivered services?
➤ Will chaperones be available if the patient would like someone besides the pharmacist present when services are delivered?
➤ What data security measures are being implemented to protect patient information?

Complete Education and Training

Pharmacy staff must be trained on the processes and technologies associated with implementation of patient care services. Providing consistent training to pharmacists and technicians will be essential in ensuring staff is knowledgeable about the policies and procedures for providing services and explaining the value to patients. Pharmacists who will be providing the patient care services should also ensure that they have both the clinical confidence and competence to provide the determined services. At the organizational level, it may be determined that pharmacists providing the services must have completed specified education and training or can demonstrate specific competency and proficiency in providing the specific service. As the complexity of patient care services increases, education and training requirements will also likely increase.

➤ Are there any state-level education and training requirements for pharmacists to deliver the service?
➤ Are there state or federal laws or regulations that the pharmacy team should be trained about related to provision of the patient care services?
➤ What competencies, clinical knowledge, skills, and abilities do the pharmacist need to effectively deliver the specific services?
➤ What professional programs exist for training pharmacists in the area of patient care service delivery that will be provided (e.g. APhA’s Pharmacy-based Immunization Delivery certificate training program)?
➤ What knowledge should the pharmacy team have about the medications and devices used to deliver the patient care services?
➤ What skills and knowledge do the pharmacy team members need to productively enroll and engage patients in services (e.g. culture competence)?
Questions to Consider When Expanding Pharmacy-based Patient Care Services

➤ Will the pharmacist need to undergo credentialing and/or privileging to deliver the new service? If yes, how will the credentialing or privileging be obtained?
➤ How can the pharmacy team’s confidence be developed to aid in the delivery of high quality care?
➤ How will the pharmacy team be trained on the workflow, policies, and procedures used in patient care delivery?
➤ Who will be responsible for training the staff and ensuring they achieve and maintain the necessary level of competence to be involved in patient care service delivery?

Develop Processes for Collaboration and Communication
Pharmacists should implement a standardized, consistent, and thorough procedure for communication and collaboration with other pharmacy team members, patients, family members, other caregivers, and members of the patient’s health care team, as authorized by the patient.

➤ How will the pharmacy team determine the patients’ communication preferences?
➤ Through what mechanisms will the pharmacy team communicate with the patient?
➤ What types of information will be included in standard communications to the patient?
➤ How will the pharmacist know what other health care providers are on the patient’s care team?
➤ How will the pharmacist form a collaborative relationship with other relevant providers on the patient’s health care team to deliver patient care?
➤ Through what mechanisms will the pharmacy team communicate with others on the care team?
➤ What types of information will be included in standard communications to others on the care team?
➤ Are there other individuals or groups that the pharmacist should collaborate with in the care of the patient or the development/operations of the service?

Establish a System to Document Care Provided
The practice should establish a system of documentation and record retention that follows established guidelines, standards, privacy regulations, and best practices. This system will facilitate communication and collaboration with other members of the pharmacy team, patients, health care providers, and other stakeholders.

➤ What information will be part of the standard documentation of services provided?
➤ In what format will care be documented (e.g. paper, electronic)?
➤ Are modifications or additions to the pharmacy’s existing documentation system needed to provide effective care?
➤ What reporting features can be used to export the documentation for the patient and others on the care team and to measure progress toward clinical goals and outcomes?
➤ For how long will records be retained?
Questions to Consider When Expanding Pharmacy-based Patient Care Services

➤ How will the pharmacy address legal or contractual requirements related to documenting the care that is delivered?
➤ What documentation practices must be implemented to meet billing requirements of payers?

Collect & Evaluate Outcomes Data
Collecting data elements can provide immense value to the pharmacy and potential collaborators. Greater access to data yields information that can facilitate quality improvement, cost savings, and collaboration among providers. Collected data is useful in evaluating how well the program is being executed, the impact it is having, and areas of quality improvement. Externally, the data reports can be used to show improved safety, efficacy, and outcomes from the service to potential payers, providers, policymakers, and patients.

➤ How would you define success of the service, what are the metrics for measuring success, and what is the timeline for meeting those metrics?
➤ How will the patient’s progress toward meeting their clinical goals be documented and tracked?
➤ What process, clinical outcome, financial, satisfaction, or other measures are important to monitor for this service?
➤ What data points will be useful to collect to determine the efficiency, efficacy, and impact of the service?
➤ What data points and outcomes do payers, health care provider partners, and other stakeholders care most about?
➤ How will data be collected (e.g. what system or form(s) will be used)?
➤ How will feedback from patients, caregivers, providers, and others be collected and integrated into policy and process improvements?
➤ How frequently and by whom will the data be aggregated and analyzed?
➤ What information will be included in reports of analyzed data?
➤ Will you plan to share population health outcomes to advance public health efforts?
➤ How will the analyzed data be used to improve the service?
Conclusion

Depending on the service and your practice, developing a new pharmacy-based patient care service can be a large undertaking. Carefully considering each of the questions included in this document can help prepare you for the process and may lead you to have a more successful launch of the service. However, even if you answer every question and formulate a robust plan, it is essential to be adaptable as service delivery takes place. There is no way to predict every potential outcome, and your patients, community, and collaborators will likely share feedback about your new service that will help to improve your plan and path forward. Keeping an open mind and periodically revisiting the questions to consider included in this document may help refresh and improve your service. Expanding patient care services can be a challenging and rewarding experience as you work to improve the health of your patient and community. This document is designed to assist pharmacists throughout their journey to expand pharmacy-based patient care service delivery.