

September 24, 2009

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Medication Non-adherence Top Culprit in Health Care Waste

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Poor medication adherence is one of the greatest waste culprits in modern health care, according to a new report from the New England Healthcare Institute (NEHI). "[Thinking Outside the Pillbox: A System-wide Approach to Improving Patient Medication Adherence for Chronic Disease](#)" provides solutions to improving medication adherence, particularly among patients with chronic disease, and specifically names pharmacists as one of the key purveyors of solutions to this vexing problem. Our organizations, representing pharmacists and pharmacies in all practice settings, strongly urge you to support proposals to improve medication adherence, as detailed below. These proposals will improve quality of care and curb our health care system's rate of growth.

Patients with chronic diseases who are not vigilant about medication adherence are especially vulnerable to worsening of their conditions. These easily preventable conditions in turn cause expensive medical care down the line. According to the brief, **patients with diabetes and low levels of adherence have nearly twice the average total annual health care costs as high-adherence patients (\$16,498 versus \$8,886)**. Employers are also affected; an average mid-sized company with \$10 million in claims will see \$1 million in avoidable health care spending. All of these figures add up. As you seek to address the economic viability of care models, improved medication adherence has never been timelier.

The NEHI brief offers concrete solutions for policymakers to consider when addressing the issue of medication adherence in health reform efforts, including: creating health care teams, which would prominently feature pharmacists; educational counseling of patients by primary care providers or pharmacists; payment reform (realigning reimbursement incentives to encourage providers to invest in resources such as counseling services); and employing health information technologies, such as electronic health records, e-prescribing, and clinical decision support systems to support adherence initiatives.

As you work to finalize a health reform proposal, we strongly encourage you to support provisions that would improve patient adherence to medication regimens, such as:

- Creating a payment structure to prevent hospital readmissions that includes incentives for medication compliance [Section 216 of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee's proposal];
- Requiring care teams to have the support necessary to provide medication therapy management (MTM) services, and requiring that transitions-of-care activities focus on medication reconciliation and MTM (Section 1301 of the House Energy & Commerce Committee's proposal; Section 212 of the Senate HELP Committee's proposal); and

- Providing patients and prescribers the opportunity to access pharmacist-provided MTM services (Cong. Butterfield's amendment to the House proposal; Section 213 of the Senate HELP Committee's proposal).

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss questions you may have regarding any of these provisions. Should you wish to do so, please contact John Coster, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the National Community Pharmacists Association at (703) 888-0859 or john.coster@ncpanet.org or Kristina Lunner, Vice President of Government Affairs for the American Pharmacists Association at (202) 429-7507 or klunner@aphanet.org.

Sincerely,

Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American College of Clinical Pharmacy
American Pharmacists Association
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
College of Psychiatric & Neurologic Pharmacists
Food Marketing Institute
International Academy of Compounding Pharmacists
National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations
National Association of Chain Drug Stores
National Community Pharmacists Association
Walgreen Co.

cc: Amanda Makki, Health LA