

# **Managed Care Pharmacy**

Managed care is not a new concept. In fact, managed care traces its roots back to the 1930s. The government first became involved in managed care back in 1973 with the passage of the Health Maintenance Organization Act. Today, managed care is generally defined as an organized health care delivery system designed to improve both the quality and the accessibility of health care, including pharmaceutical care, while containing costs. As managed care pharmacy works to forge innovative, comprehensive programs that deliver effective pharmaceutical care, it also improves outcomes and overall quality of life for the patient.

## **What is a Managed Care Pharmacist?**

The managed care pharmacist has a distinctive role on the health care team. A pharmacist working in a managed care environment is intimately involved in the care and course of pharmaceutical treatment and plays a vital role in contributing to positive patient outcomes. The areas of opportunities for pharmacists to coordinate patient care include but are not limited to data integration, communication management with physicians and patients, outcomes research efforts, drug utilization review, disease management, academic detailing, cost analysis programs, and pharmacy benefit design. In addition, pharmacists are able to qualify and quantify the results of different therapies and programs, and therefore add value to the health care team.

## **Work Settings for Managed Care Pharmacists**

The managed care environment offers a great opportunity for pharmacists to move away from the technical tasks of pharmacy to assume greater responsibility for patient care. Pharmacists involved in managed care pharmacy are employed by various managed care organizations, including health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and pharmacy benefit management companies (PBMs), as well as by retail pharmacies, hospitals, integrated health systems, the pharmaceutical industry, academia, and consulting firms.

## **Why Should You Consider a Career in Managed Care Pharmacy?**

Managed care has risen to dominance in the U.S. health care system. The advantages of choosing managed care pharmacy as a career are the opportunities to provide comprehensive pharmaceutical care and to work directly with other health care providers to determine the most effective pharmaceutical treatment for patients. As a member of a managed care pharmacy team, the pharmacist has the opportunity to wear many hats. There are numerous job opportunities that offer competitive compensation.

## **What Preparation is Necessary to Practice in Managed Care Pharmacy?**

Managed care organizations (MCOs) may differ in structure and in the employment opportunities they offer to pharmacists. For persons entering the managed care pharmacy field, the most valuable assets are managed care and clinical experience, including a

residency practice in a managed care setting, and an advanced degree. All students entering schools of pharmacy are awarded the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) degree as the professional degree in pharmacy. Students are required to complete at least four academic years of professional study, followed by a minimum of two years of pre-professional study for a total of at least 6 years of postsecondary course work.

### **Future of Managed Care Pharmacy**

This is an exciting time to be entering the profession of managed care pharmacy. While our evolving health care system presents managed care pharmacists with enormous challenges, it also offers many opportunities to participate in novel professional experiences and practice their profession in unique ways. There is no question that managed care pharmacy will continue to play an integral role in patient care. Managed care pharmacy offers pharmacists exciting opportunities to use their professional skills and positively affect pharmaceutical care through work in such areas as disease state management, outcomes research, drug utilization review, data integration, and formulary development, in addition to patient and physician education. Also, pending legislation that expects to offer some form of prescription drug coverage to Medicare beneficiaries will present numerous opportunities for managed care pharmacists to assist in the design and administration of the pharmacy benefit for this population.

### **How Can I Learn More about Managed Care Pharmacy?**

Through professional pharmacy associations such as the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP), pharmacists and other health care providers have opportunities to network and share their own knowledge, ideas, and concerns with colleagues throughout the pharmacy profession.

Visit AMCP's web site at [www.amcp.org](http://www.amcp.org) for more information on the latest updates on clinical, market, legislative and regulatory, and administrative issues shaping the practice of managed care pharmacy. Or, call 1-800-TAP-AMCP to get answers to your questions about the evolving role of the managed care pharmacist on the patient care-giving team.