

## **Pharmaceutical and Health Care Distributors**

Today's health care distributors may be relatively unknown to patients, but they are vitally important to those who need medicines or medical supplies. These companies assure that the products needed to diagnose, prevent and treat the nation's health care ills are distributed to the many locations where they are used. To guarantee that delivery is accurate, efficient and timely, pharmaceutical and health care distributors have enlarged their own service offerings in recent years to provide not only the products themselves, but information and other services designed to make their customers more efficient and effective. They are integral partners with others in health care serving patients and working to reduce the cost of care.

Though pharmaceutical and health care distributors have low visibility to the consumer or patient, their job is vitally important to patients, physicians who prescribe medications, pharmacists who provide drug therapy management and fill prescriptions, and the health care product supply system at large. Distributors are a vital force in saving consumers over \$50 billion annually by reducing health care transactions and their associated costs. They provide economies of scale to reduce distribution expenses, manage inventories to ensure product availability and simplify distribution to ensure vital medication is available when it's needed and where it's needed.

Pharmaceutical and healthcare distributors protect the quality and security of the product distributed. Their warehouses are licensed under the Prescription Drug Marketing Act to ensure high standards in the safe handling and storage of these important products. Daily deliveries to pharmacies, hospitals and clinics along with product rotation, environmental controls and sophisticated security ensure product freshness and integrity. As government-licensed operations, pharmaceutical and health care distributors adhere to stringent storage and handling procedures designed to ensure the potency, freshness and integrity of the medications they distribute. These procedures address such issues as:

- Record keeping;
- Security;
- Temperature and humidity requirements;
- Personnel training;
- Returned goods and recall handling;
- Emergency planning; and
- Receipt and distribution of product.

Distributors are innovators in health care product distribution. They are constantly working to reduce paperwork and errors and provide real time product information. They also have pioneered information networks and deployed new technologies to their suppliers' and customers' benefit.

As a result, distributors truly are the vital link in ensuring product availability; linking pharmacy, payers and manufacturers; and providing services to support patient care. This is just the beginning of what distributors can and will contribute.

## **What is in Store for the Future?**

As the needs of the nation change and the demands for health care increase, pharmaceutical and health care distributors will be among those companies that will create innovative services and business operations that will not only respond, but also reshape the care-giving landscape. Though it may be impossible today to predict just what those services might be, it is certain that the core business objective of providing distribution services that protect the quality and integrity of health care products will never suffer.