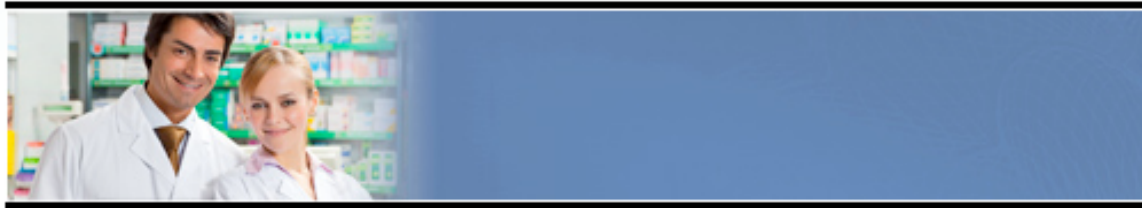


The Modern Pharmacist



In-field Education Leads to Better Patient Outcomes

Mention the profession of “pharmacist” to some people, and they’ll still conjure stereotypical images of a bygone era. Considering how vastly different and diverse the profession is today, it’s almost humorous to think of the archetypal neighborhood druggist we once knew. No longer is the pharmacist a distant voice bellowing down from an elevated platform, surrounded by counters stacked with vials and mortar and pestle. Not hardly! And though it may take a while for perception to catch up to reality, the transformation of the modern pharmacist—and the industry as a whole—is already well in place.

As a matter of fact, over the last decade, this profession has evolved from the inside out—from inside classrooms to out in the field, to be precise. Today’s pharmacy students undertake six to seven years of extensive coursework molded around in-field experiences. In sharp contrast to those long-gone stereotypes, pharmacists today are trained to be accessible communicators, clinically knowledgeable and invested in patient care. They’re guided to give more input to precipitate better outcomes.

It’s a new tact not only for the pharmacy industry, but for the healthcare system as a whole. As statistics undeniably indicate, the system bears a heavy load when patients don’t properly take medications or forget or can’t afford to fill prescriptions. Improper administering of drugs can ultimately lead to more ailments, ER visits, the need for further treatment or worse. However, educating new pharmacists to be involved and engaged in patient care ultimately helps to create more involved, engaged patients—in supplement to providers’ ongoing treatment initiatives.

According to John Long, R.Ph., Emdeon’s Senior Vice President of Pharmacy Services and member of several college of pharmacy advisory councils, modern pharmacist education is producing Doctors of Pharmacy who are at ease in practice settings, clinically adept and able to participate in the management of patient compliance. Not only are there better tools and technology for tracking the “adherence and persistence” of prescription management, most importantly, today’s pharmacists are educated to actively participate in bringing about better outcomes.

“Graduates entering the profession are no longer tied so much to the product—the medicine, but to the patient,” Long explains. “They ask how they can improve service. They have good communication skills. They relate to providers and patients of all ages...to provide expertise and consultation, not just dispense drugs.”

Long reports that provisions made in Medicare Part D have been helpful in facilitating the transitioning role of the pharmacist. Thanks to funds allotted for compensation, pharmacists are able to invest more time in consultation and patient care. This evolution is truly an

overall investment with great potential dividends for everyone, as it allows pharmacists to integrate more deeply and effectively into the patient care process.

While at first blush it may sound simple for pharmacists to become more involved in patient care, there's a plethora of extenuating factors to add to the challenge. Students of pharmacy are trained extensively not only in clinical aspects, but in management tracks and informatics, as well as specialty fields. Then, there's the business side of the profession, in which expertise must be translated to fit the environment in which it is practiced, be it small shop, major chain, long term care facility, mail-order, hospital or so on. Additionally, pharmacists in training must navigate the ever-changing landscape of the healthcare business as a whole, including advancements in automation and technology, e-Prescribing and EMRs, benefits management, payer and claims issues, direct-to-consumer advertising and drug development and availability. Suffice to say, the professional scope and responsibility of the modern pharmacist is a growing and moving target all at once.

"Unlike ever before, there's a great need for pharmacists' expertise...and there are so many tracks and opportunities," Long summarizes. "Today pharmacists can use their knowledge and skills to directly affect patients' outcomes for better results."

Down from the platform of eras past, pharmacists are now out in the field, touching lives and improving patient care. With a new approach to education, pharmacists of today are better equipped to help us all learn to take better care of our health.

A Short Look at a Long Journey

Get to Know Emdeon's John Long, R.Ph., MBA

As Emdeon's Senior Vice President of Pharmacy Services, John Long is at the forefront of simplifying the business of healthcare for pharmacists, providers and payers alike. While his position at the forefront certainly keeps him busy, Long also holds his own on the frontline. He's still a licensed pharmacist who holds advisory council seats on several college of pharmacy schools. That means Long is in touch and up close with the inner workings of the profession he grew up in, and he's actively participating in shaping its future.

Long's pharmacy career has covered just about every possible angle, from chain pharmacy experience to his current role with Emdeon and nearly every point imaginable in between. He started on this track back in high school, working for an independent pharmacy. After graduating from The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy, he worked for a major chain before transitioning to the role of pharmacist for a long term care organization with a focus on geriatrics for seven years while pursuing his MBA.

Next, Long joined a pharmacy benefit management (PBM) organization where he oversaw the dispensing of millions of prescriptions annually, including the dissemination of clinical information through extensive Call Center operations. In his 17-year tenure, he was directly involved in industry changes and worked on the cusp of the burgeoning pharmacy benefit management industry leading the organization to become the dominant player in the PBM industry. From there, he started a consulting organization servicing the PBM industry until he accepted his current position with Emdeon.

Long is invested and involved in his chosen profession, and he sees it from nearly every angle possible. That's ultimately great news for Emdeon Pharmacy Services customers and partners who benefit from his diverse perspectives and unique vision.

Non-compliance: The Leaky Bucket*

Did you know in 2008, for every 100 prescriptions:

- only 50-70% go to the pharmacy
- only 25-30% are taken properly
- only 48-66% come out of pharmacy
- only 15-20% are refilled as prescribed

Improper or lack of compliance with prescribed medication intake takes its toll on the healthcare system in untold numbers every year. Non-compliance can result in a 30-50% clinical failure rate, additional physician, ER and hospital visits as well as increased nursing home admissions. Many factors are contributing to patients' failure to take drugs as prescribed. In April, health-information company Wolters Kluwer Health released data that revealed patients are abandoning prescriptions at a much higher rate than in 2007 due to cost. It is no surprise that the modern pharmacist is now being regarded by many as the cure for a very serious problem.

** Sources: IMS 2008 Review, Wall Street Journal 4/09; NACDS and Drug Topics Archive, Office of the Inspector General, National Council on Patient Information & Education*

In Real Life: One Story of Education in Action

Prioritizing patient interaction as a means of addressing the issue of non-compliance brings potentially life-saving results for the modern pharmacist. Just ask Justin Wilson and his colleagues with Valu-Med Pharmacy.

The Valu-Med team has instituted a dedicated initiative to encourage compliance through personalized patient interactions. Recently, this approach revealed one patient who'd nearly stopped taking her meds because she was caught in a Part D-related financial quandary and couldn't afford the several hundred dollars per month in prescriptions. After a case review and consultation with her doctor, the Valu-Med Pharmacy team was able to reduce her monthly costs to about \$50 per month, thanks to generic substitution and better formulary choices.

"Now we try to conduct medication reviews with patients before they come close to falling into the 'Part D doughnut hole,'" Wilson reports.

Innovative approaches are providing new solutions to age-old challenges for pharmacists. The profession itself may be experiencing a shortage, but there's an abundance of ideas, technologies and practices leading to great progress. And it's the modern patient who stands to benefit.

Just what the Pharmacist Ordered



Webinar reaches 925 professionals with the latest ePrescribing news

Imagine a classroom filled with 925 pharmacy professionals convening to learn about an issue affecting how they do their jobs on a daily basis. With a R. Ph./ J.D. leading the discussion and so many practicing pros joining in to ask questions, just think of the valuable exchange of knowledge and ideas for practical application that session would bring out. Not to mention, that would have to be an extremely large classroom!

Thanks to technology, the pharmacy profession is no longer confined by walls, hard copies—time, space or place. Those 925 pharmacy pros really did convene recently to learn about “ePrescribing and Its Impact on Pharmacy Practice.” But the gathering took place online in a virtual classroom, via a webinar facilitated by Drug Store News and sponsored by [Emdeon](#). No classroom required!

Just as technology has enabled us to log on to learn in real time with colleagues thousands of miles apart, it has long since ushered in electronic capabilities that have forever changed how we prescribe and dispense medications. Technology has minimized (and sometimes eliminated) the time, space and place between medical practices, patients and pharmacies. It’s changed all we used to know about the processing and dispensing of prescriptions.

That’s why the “E-Prescribing and Its Impact on Pharmacy Practice” webinar was so well ‘attended.’ The core information in this continuing education course is essential for anyone in a pharmacy practice. Rules and regulations seem to be evolving ceaselessly, and there are legal and procedural ramifications that must be learned.

Laura Carpenter, R. Ph., J.D. led the webinar. From her vantage point as both a pharmacist and a lawyer, Carpenter is keenly in tune with the timeliness of laws and risk management issues impacting e-prescribing. She covered an array of pertinent topics, including

- incentives and benefits of e-prescribing (encompassing up-to-the-moment MIPPA and stimulus package parameters)
- possible disadvantages and issues of compliance
- governing laws, even at the state level and
- the vital role of pharmacists in implementing best practices.

She also addressed prescriber-side recommendations that would make e-prescribing more seamless and efficient in tandem with the progressive investments already made by pharmacies.

Amidst the 925 participants in this webinar, perspectives and practices ran the gamut, yet

all were brought together by the need to know the latest in the world of e-prescribing. The exchange of knowledge and open dialogue revealed that pharmacies are on a progressive path in the right direction. Challenges are inevitable whenever change occurs, but pharmacies are navigating the evolving terrain well.

Certainly, interactive forums such as this will increase the industry's ability to further implement e-prescribing effectively—no classroom required!

You Can Still Log On to Learn!

Class is in session 24/7 at cedrugstorenews.com

The "E-Prescribing and Its Impact on Pharmacy Practice" webinar is available for viewing online via Drug Store News' Continuing Education site, www.cedrugstorenews.com.

The session is free to view online. There is a fee for anyone seeking to participate for Continuing Education credits, though the fee is waived for cedrugstorenews.com members. In addition to the recorded presentation, there are downloadable supplemental materials available.

The topics and information are extremely timely and relevant. Log on today and look for lesson # 401-000-09-053-H03 and the Emdeon logo.

The webinar highlighted important information about current and future MIPPA incentives for ePrescribing.

2009 & 2010: 2% incentive (part B claims) payment to professionals who "successfully ePrescribe"

- Compliant with 4/1/09 Part D eRx requirements
- Complicated reporting requirements

2011 & 2012: drops to 1% incentive payment

2012: 1% Penalty if not e-prescribing

- Providers will only be paid 99% of their Part B charges
- Hardship exemption process will exist

2013: 1.5% penalty

2014 and beyond: 2% penalty

Log on to www.cedrugstorenews.com for details on the Stimulus Package's impact on ePrescribing.