

Medication Therapy Management

Part Two: Strategies to Improve Quality and Reduce Costs

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***P**art one of this series described Medication Therapy Management (“MTM”) as a secret but powerful solution for prevalent problems associated with medication use. Doctors Cipolle and Strand have built their careers around the design, development, and implementation of programs that teach practitioners the principles behind the science. Their work has now resulted in the industry beginning to identify how the MTM model can be instituted within health care settings and practices.*

The health care industry has worked hard over the past 30 years to improve quality of care and stem the rising cost trends. In spite of these efforts, we are still seeing economic estimates (as referenced in part one) that \$100 billion is spent annually on drug related morbidity and mortality.

Technology advancements and new drug discoveries have offered new solutions for patient care.

These powerful solutions,

however, can also produce significant safety and efficacy concerns without the appropriate monitoring and tracking systems.

MTM provides a cost effective solution to quality of care

Policymakers are searching for practical solutions to rising costs

Policymakers are raising concerns that current health care cost trends are showing health care spending rising from \$2 trillion in 2006 to \$4 trillion in 2013. Drugs and overall influence on health care services will play an even larger role by 2013. Policymakers such as Secretary of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) Michael O. Leavitt are looking for solutions and challenging those in the industry to help design approaches to simplify the rising complexities of patient care. Secretary Leavitt suggests that health care does not even operate as a system, but rather as a sector. To advance to a system, Leavitt offers four foundation components that are necessary:

- ❖ Electronic connectivity
- ❖ Standards on quality
- ❖ Standards for price comparability
- ❖ Incentives

The health care industry is in a state of needing to be transformed. Challenges are coming from not only policymakers, but also all participants who make up the industry: providers, payers, and patients.

Medication challenges

Health care cannot undertake any transformation without considering how medication usage can be improved. Dr. Patrick O'Connor, in his editorial in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* on September 25, 2006, summarized eight challenges to develop new strategies that better manage medication usage. O'Connor identified five key *challenge* themes:

- ❖ Use medications judiciously
- ❖ Minimize the number of drugs and doses
- ❖ Improve communications between providers and patients
- ❖ Provide incentives for adherence and coaching
- ❖ Make use of sophisticated information and decision support systems

The key challenge themes can be addressed at all levels of health care. This can start with individual patient/physician relationships and advance to organized payer and provider populations of patients.

*Medication usage
is a core
challenge of
health care
reform*

MTM, as described in part one, offers the infrastructure solution that can begin to transform how medications are used and how they influence overall health care services.

A knowledge system approach

MTM offers tools and techniques to transform how medication usage is managed, particularly with populations of patients who take multiple drugs for several chronic conditions. Doctors Cipolle and Strand have shown that 15 to 20 million people in the United States are candidates for these services.

Notably, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (“CMS”) has established a financial trigger for Part D Medicare beneficiaries: Any person spending \$4,000 or more per year for medications is eligible for an MTM service.

MTM is a knowledge system that establishes a patient care approach and documentation system linking together patient diagnosis, drug dosage, and respective patient outcome into the following systematic process:

Assessment:

- ❖ Evaluate appropriateness, effectiveness, safety and compliance
- ❖ Identify drug therapy problems

Care Plan:

- ❖ Resolve drug therapy problems
- ❖ Establish goals of therapy
- ❖ Institute interventions

Follow-Up:

- ❖ Evaluate progress in meeting goals
- ❖ Record actual patient outcomes
- ❖ Reassess new problems

MTM is an example of a sophisticated information and decision support system that Dr. O'Connor asks for in his editorial. The basic core competencies that an MTM service must provide are:

- ❖ a standardized service approach
- ❖ systematic documentation
- ❖ tracking and monitoring of care
- ❖ data capture for value demonstration

In individual practices, physicians and pharmacists can identify patients for MTM services. Larger payer and provider systems can use *triggers* such as diagnoses, numbers of prescriptions, or financial expenditures to identify patients out of larger populations.

MTM is gaining more visibility throughout the industry. CMS will be instituting more standards and requirements for plan sponsors to offer MTM services under Medicare Part D. Selected state Medicaid programs are testing and implementing MTM approaches. Health plans and health systems are exploring MTM services to complement current pharmacy and medical management initiatives. Retail pharmacy organizations are developing capabilities for MTM in anticipation of payer needs and requirements.

CMS, commercial health plans, and retail pharmacy are all exploring MTM services

MTM, as it has been developed, meets the foundation components that Secretary Leavitt describes as necessary for health care to advance as a system. The delivery of MTM services to targeted patients can satisfy the challenges outlined by Dr. O'Connor.

Responding to the challenge

The MTM knowledge system can respond to the challenge of improving drug usage problems. However, this depends on industry participants (policymakers, providers, payers, and patients) implementing these services so that information is collected and drug therapy problems solved. These

steps will result in improved patient care and a reduction in the current drug morbidity and mortality trends.

Unfortunately, just having MTM solutions is not enough. Incorporating this type of technology and service into plans for policymakers, payers, and providers takes time and necessitates culture change. If transformation is going to be achieved in any part of health care, changes in culture will have to take place. The use of new information technology needs to integrate into workflow for practitioners delivering patient care. All stakeholders need to be involved in these developments.

Listed below are key action points that stakeholders should undertake.

Policymakers:

- ❖ Establish standards
- ❖ Create value targets
- ❖ Provide for incentives

Wider MTM implementation requires a culture change among stakeholders

Payers:

- ❖ Evaluate opportunities critically
- ❖ Establish care delivery targets
- ❖ Provide incentives to providers and patients

Providers:

- ❖ Incorporate decision support tools
- ❖ Establish care delivery targets
- ❖ Demonstrate success and value

MTM offers significant opportunities for the health care industry to transform the unfortunate drug usage patterns that result in unnecessary patient morbidity and mortality. It will, however, take a concerted effort by all stakeholders. The rewards will be improved quality of care, reduced costs, and a substantial reduction in the \$100 billion of annual costs to the health care system.

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