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Pharmacy Leaders Discuss National Action Plan to Increase Patient Access to Pharmacists' Clinical Services

WASHINGTON, DC – Pharmacy organization leaders from across the country recently worked toward a unified, national action plan for integrating pharmacists into current and evolving health care delivery models. Increasing patient access to pharmacists' patient care services through value recognition allows the profession to better contribute to optimal patient health while saving healthcare dollars.

Provider Status for Pharmacists: Creating a National Action Plan was held in conjunction with the 2013 American Pharmacists Association (APhA) Annual Meeting & Exposition in Los Angeles. The unprecedented meeting of nearly 200 pharmacy leaders from national organizations, states associations and academia was led by APhA, the National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA), the University of Southern California (USC) School of Pharmacy and the California Pharmacist Association (CPhA). The attendees gathered to discuss how to achieve integration of pharmacists into the evolving patient-centered, team-based health care system.

“Health care spending as a portion of total income is rapidly increasing, from 5% in the 1960s to almost 18% in 2009,” stated Dana Goldman, PhD, Director, USC Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics and Professor USC School of Pharmacy and Price School of Public Policy. “Prevention is key to controlling health care costs and pharmacists can play an important role in managing this process.”

Patients and health care providers often do not have access to the benefit of the patient care services pharmacists provide because the proper recognition and payment models are not in place. Studies and practice-based experience have shown that when pharmacists are involved in the provision of patient care services as members of the health care team, patient outcomes improve, patients report higher rates of satisfaction and overall health care costs are reduced.

“With the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion set for implementation nine short months from now, we must press forward with opportunities to ensure that the millions of people who will be receiving insurance coverage have avenues to achieve care,” stated Jon R. Roth, CAE, CPhA CEO. “By affirming pharmacists as health care providers, it will ensure patients can receive a range of primary care services from highly trained and widely available pharmacists.”

“The forces have never before been so perfectly aligned for pharmacists to be a recognized provider on the healthcare team,” stated R. Pete Vanderveen, PhD, RPh, Dean, USC School of Pharmacy. “Our government is trying to take control of healthcare costs and pharmacists have hard data that show our value – both in improving patient outcomes and saving healthcare dollars.”

The attending pharmacy leaders considered a slate of draft principles for the profession to seek recognition for pharmacists' role as health care providers under one unified voice and message. These broad-based principles will serve to frame the profession's efforts to seek increased access for patients to pharmacists' patient care services.

“If we are successful [in achieving recognition], patients will be well served by pharmacists' patient care services and our services will be valued and covered,” commented Thomas E. Menighan, BSPHarm, MBA, ScD (Hon), FAPhA, Executive Vice President and CEO, APhA “If we can speak with a common message and one voice as a profession, we will be much more effective at getting buy-in from policy makers and the public.”

The goals of the meeting were to:

- Discuss the framework for a national action plan to achieve pharmacist provider status in an evolving healthcare delivery system
- Review and discuss principles drafted by the National Pharmacy Provider Status Coalition
- Identify ways that stakeholder individuals and organizations can support and contribute to the national effort so that pharmacy has a united front

“For success to be achieved, pharmacy representatives from local, regional and national pharmacy organizations and stakeholders need to help shape the discussion,” concluded Rebecca Snead, BSPPharm, Executive Vice President and CEO, NASPA. “There are many next steps that will need to occur to reach our goal, and we will all have to work together to make this successful.”

About the American Pharmacists Association

The American Pharmacists Association, founded in 1852 as the American Pharmaceutical Association, is a 501 (c)(6) organization, representing more than 62,000 practicing pharmacists, pharmaceutical scientists, student pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and others interested in advancing the profession. APhA, dedicated to helping all pharmacists improve medication use and advance patient care, is the first-established and largest association of pharmacists in the United States. For more information, please visit www.pharmacist.com.

About the National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA)

The National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA) promotes leadership, sharing, learning, and policy exchange among state pharmacy associations and pharmacy leaders nationwide, and provides education and advocacy to support pharmacists, patients, and communities working together to improve public health. NASPA was founded in 1927 as the National Council of State Pharmacy Association Executives (NCSPAEE).

About the University of Southern California (USC) School of Pharmacy

The USC School of Pharmacy pioneered the doctor of pharmacy degree and established the nation’s first clinical pharmacy program. Throughout its long history, the Schools has been an innovator in educational programming, research and patient care. The School’s focus on clinical pharmacy, community outreach, regulatory science, drug discovery and development, and health economics and policy positions the USC School of Pharmacy as a leader in the safe, efficient and optimal use of medication therapy that can save lives and improve the human condition.

About the California Pharmacist Association (CPhA)

The California Pharmacists Association represents pharmacy professionals from all practice settings whose mission is to promote, expand and defend the profession of pharmacy and the role of pharmacists in California.