Consensus Development of Essential Factors Demonstrating Primary Care Practice Readiness for Establishing Clinical Pharmacy Services

Authors: Fay A, Carrington A, Pokallus A, Ulrich I, Scott M, Drake E, Wilson C

Practice Site: Mountain Area Health Education Center and UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy; Asheville, NC

Background: Pharmacists have a well-established history of positively impacting patient care outcomes and reducing cost in a variety of settings and populations, with many national organizations calling for the incorporation of pharmacists into the healthcare team. While the Patient-Centered Medical Home model has been an ideal setting for ambulatory care pharmacists to integrate into the primary care setting, developing a financially sustainable business model has been a long-standing challenge. As the integration becomes more feasible through unique billing models and the shift towards value based care, the ability to determine a practice’s “readiness” to incorporate a pharmacist has become more important. While there are several resources available discussing the necessary steps to build pharmacy services in the outpatient setting, an important first step which needs expounding is a practice’s readiness for clinical pharmacy services.

Objective: To identify characteristics of primary care practices that are necessary to establish and maintain ambulatory care clinical pharmacy services.

Methods: A focus group of fifteen ambulatory care pharmacists in Western North Carolina developed a survey of twenty-six practice readiness statements pertaining to the development of clinical pharmacy services in primary care. National ambulatory care pharmacy experts were then surveyed using a modified Delphi model for consensus building to determine which items were essential. Four rounds of surveys were completed. After each round, statements were accepted as consensus, modified, or removed from the survey based on responses. Statements were deemed to have reached consensus when eighty percent of respondents were in agreement.

Results: A total of six statements reached agreement after four rounds of survey: 1) full integration into the team, 2) access to the electronic health record, 3) a physician or administrative champion, 4) appropriate equipment provided by the clinic, 5) a private room to see patients, and 6) a practice that is open to team-based care.

Conclusion: Ambulatory care pharmacy experts identified six essential elements of a primary care practice that are necessary prior to establishing clinical pharmacy services. Pharmacists and organizations who are considering adding ambulatory care pharmacists into primary care practices should consider these factors when identifying a practice that is "pharmacy ready".