



ASHP Principles for Health Care Reform Making Medication Use Safe and Effective

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Reforming America's health care system must acknowledge the critical component that safe and effective medication use should play in providing care for patients. Unfortunately, the current health care system does not achieve the level of safety and effectiveness that patients deserve. The value of medications cannot be fully achieved unless pharmacist services are also provided in order to ensure appropriate use.

Pharmacists who work in hospitals and health systems can serve as vital members of the patient care team by working hand-in-hand with doctors and nurses to care for critically ill patients with complex medication needs. Safe and effective medication use should be a component of all proposed solutions to the central health care reform issues of access, cost, and quality.

As policymakers consider proposals to reform our nation's health care system, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) urges lawmakers to consider solutions that allow patients to benefit from the medication-use expertise of pharmacists that result in improved therapeutic outcomes and safety. The following principles should be included in any health care system reform.

1. Access: Ensuring Coverage for the Safe and Effective Use of Medications

All persons in the United States should have access to prescription medications and related pharmacist services as part of health coverage. All insurers should use the full range of methods to ensure safe medication use, achieve optimal outcomes, and minimize costs. Safe and effective medication use through medication reconciliation and other patient care services provided by pharmacists help improve care coordination and overall continuity of care, especially for chronically ill patients who are taking multiple medications. This includes an important role for pharmacists in the provision of primary care and the emerging concept of a health care (medical) home.

2. Cost: Sustainable Financing for Safe and Effective Medications

Financing a sustainable medication use system that is safe and effective requires the proper use of generic medications, a regulatory pathway for follow-on biologic medications (biosimilars), a robust postmarketing surveillance and safety system to identify unknown risks, and a reimbursement policy that recognizes the value of pharmacists as providers of medication-related patient care services.

3. Quality: Aligning Incentives to Provide Safe and Effective Medication Use

Incentives to provide safe and effective medication use include a well-trained pharmacist workforce capable of managing high-risk, complex drug therapy regimens. Pharmacists who complete pharmacy practice and specialty residencies are well-qualified to be a part of that interdisciplinary team in a hospital, clinic, health care (medical) home, and other settings. Funding for pharmacy residency programs as well as incentives to new graduates through loan forgiveness programs will help develop the workforce capacity that is required to meet the needs of patients. In addition, pharmacist participation in the development of interoperable health information technology systems, including an electronic health record and e-prescribing are essential to ensuring safe and effective medication use.