

The World Has Changed: Medications Matter

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My view of the world has changed in the last 35 years. I guess that is good news. A great deal of experience and learning has occurred over that period. My medical school education included a very small portion of time on pharmacology. And as an executive for a health plan, most of my energy was focused on appropriate medical care—medications were an afterthought. As a practicing physician, I, like my peers, prescribed approximately 15 drugs on a regular basis. They were drugs that I began prescribing during my residency and continued to prescribe into my first few years of practice. It was not until I began working for a pharmacy benefit management company that I came to realize the importance of medications.

Fast-forward to today—medications and medication management have gained in importance and are recognized as being foundational to healthcare. One example of how medication management has taken its rightful place is provided by the Medicare Advantage Star Rating System. Medication management ratings comprise 44% of the total potential points in the Star Ratings. A Medicare Advantage plan cannot achieve top Star ratings without a focus on appropriate medication use and management.

If you are reading this journal, you probably have an understanding of how important medications can be and

perhaps are looking to maximize the value of appropriate care within the pharmacy space. With 2014 upon us, we will find that this space has new challenges as well as some past challenges that we have yet to completely address. Some of the new areas that we will be focusing on include the use of medications within both the public and private exchanges, the role of pharmacists in new provider models, the increase in popularity of medication therapy management programs, the increased use of transparency tools by consumers, and the integration of medical and pharmacy benefits for specialty medications. In addition to paving new paths in these areas, we will continue to focus on areas that are familiar to us all, such as appropriate utilization of medications, medication adherence, and value-based benefit designs.

I regularly get feedback that readers enjoy the monthly article that focuses on drug trends. I want to take a moment to thank CVS Caremark, as they have been the authors of this column for the last several years. As we go forward, MedImpact will be taking over the reins and sharing their views on healthcare trends, views from which we can all learn and to which we can all respond.

I welcome you all to suggest new areas of focus and interest for this column. Here's to the era of medications and medication management. [ajpb](#)

