



The Survey Says: Pharmacists Want MTM Integration

By Bill G. Felkey



AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, THE NCPA Technology and Innovation Committee members are working hard to provide help to pharmacists and the technology vendor community to prioritize their development efforts on behalf of the profession. At the time of this writing, one survey has been deployed and another has been launched to collect responses from pharmacists regarding the integration of medication therapy management into their practice management systems and workflow. The first survey began by asking, "Would you like to have an integrated feature in your pharmacy management system to identify patients qualifying for an MTM [medication therapy management] encounter?" Of the 272 pharmacists who responded, 94 percent indicated that they would desire this feature. Pharmacists who are currently providing MTM to patients must access external websites, e-mails, or respond to a fax that represents the existing communication channels available to the profession.

On the first survey, a second question helped to determine if the addition of this integrated feature would make it more likely that pharmacists would participate in offering MTM programs. This question received a 95 percent positive response from those pharmacists who indicated a desire for the new feature. The great news is that a standard for achieving this additional functionality has already been published by the American Society for Automation and Pharmacy (ASAP). Once this standardized communication channel has been implemented by pharmacy practice management vendors, then a bidirectional flow of data such as a current drug profile to be reconciled and MTM services required to be performed

would be possible between pharmacies and MTM plans. Pharmacists would also be prompted to seek patient consent and participation with the MTM process. This could take place during a scheduled appointment, or while they are waiting for other prescription dispensing activities to take place in the pharmacy. The new standard is undergoing testing, and it is hoped that the positive response from pharmacists in this and subsequent surveys will help encourage rapid implementation of the MTM standard by the vendor community.


The first survey also asked a series of open-ended questions to ascertain what other features pharmacists desired from the technology they employ to make them more efficient and effective. Some were critical that their practice management vendors had not yet provided any support for the delivery of MTM services. Other pharmacists who had MTM support in their systems also expressed a need for increased integration of billing tools associated with reimbursement for these services. This is the focus of the second survey, which NCPA members will be able to use to voice their opinions related to this matter of MTM reimbursement.

TECHNOLOGY TRACK RETURNS FOR CONVENTION

Other input from the survey was used by the Technology and Innovation Committee to form a special technology track at NCPA's Annual Convention, Oct. 23–27, 2010 in Philadelphia. Ken Whittemore of SureScripts will provide updates to attendees on electronic prescribing of con-

trolled substances. This session will be followed by a panel of mobilized pharmacists who will discuss how they use portable information appliances and other peripheral technologies that they have integrated into their workflow.

Health care reform has introduced new requirements for pharmacists to protect the HIPAA security rights of patients. There will be several practical suggestions offered on how to avoid severe penalties that come from a classification of action called willful neglect. I will be presenting a session on how to meet the demands for pharmacy connectivity that are emerging from health systems and positions as they prepare for health care reform. I will also present a newly created a set of tools available in an online Technology Resource Center created by NCPA that will include substantial technological assistance for the understanding, selection, evaluation, and adoption of supportive technologies available to the community pharmacy practice.

A special pharmacist panel will help determine the appropriate time to adopt technology such as workflow technologies according to prescription volume, and the focus of an individual practice. This should help pharmacists realize the full potential for their investment in technology systems. We are also planning a special joint session with the NCPA Communications Committee to demonstrate how social networking tools can be incorporated appropriately into a practice. I will begin the session by giving an overview of what's available. It will be followed by a demonstration from Tim Davis about the features and benefits benefiting his progressive pharmacy practice. Also, Scott Halverson, a 2011 PharmD candidate at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Pharmacy, will offer step-by-step instructions on building some of these steps by taking a pharmacist from the audience and helping that person build a promotional pharmacy Facebook page in only 30 minutes. 

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