How Health Technology Innovation Supports Medication Management Reform

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As the Biden administration designs its strategy to reform health care policy, it must address the inherent need for medication management reform. It is time to embolden health care strategy by ensuring patients understand their medications and can collaborate with their physician along with a clinical pharmacist to ensure the medicines prescribed are right for them.

With more than 10,000 drugs on the market, appropriate, effective, safe and precise use of medication and gene therapies is essential today more than ever before. Complete and accurate clinical data, securely accessed through health information technology systems, at the point of care are pivotal to changing and reforming our medication use process. Clinical data must be actionable and accessible to every member of the care team—and that team must include a clinical pharmacist. Without a proper health IT solution in place, comprehensive medication management (CMM) will remain a limited-use concept rather than a practice that is broadly available to all Americans.

CMM is definedas a team-based care solution, wherein the patient works with a physician and a team of other health care providers, including a clinical pharmacist. This interprofessional team leverages each member's specialty and expertise to achieve optimized medication use. A thorough, data-driven record of the patient's health and medical history, medications, and clinical and diagnostic findings serves as a guide to evaluating whether the individual's goals of therapy have been met.

Today this type of population identification, and individual patient evaluation, monitoring and medication correction is only happening on a very small scale, and not nearly broad enough to make a significant impact. Current health IT systems don't easily allow access to all team members or readily offer population insights and clinical data at the point of care that are required to get the medications right. To optimize medication use through CMM, the health care industry in both public and private sectors must adopt, implement and enforce data-sharing and reporting requirements.

Making technology-enabled clinical data available at the point of care to the entire team allows providers to execute critical steps in the CMM process. The data help teams determine which patients have not achieved clinical goals of therapy (or who are having medication therapy problems) and analyze actual use patterns for all medications (e.g., prescribed drugs, over-the-counter, supplements and biologics). This complete clinical data access provides patient care teams with information to assess medication for safe, effective and appropriate use. Whether it is diagnostic and lab results, pharmacogenomic testing results, clinical notes or patient status, all of the resulting data points are critical to making CMM successful.

Pandemic Pressures

Our overtaxed American health care system is fighting COVID-19 nationwide, with physician appointments, emergency room availability and hospital beds in short supply. Sadly, data indicate that improper medication therapy (misuse, underuse and overuse) can result in treatment failure, new medical problems or both. Each year. 275,000 avoidable deaths and $528.4 billion in health care costs result from suboptimal medication use (*Ann Pharmacother (https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3n76n4z6)* 2018;52[9]:829-837). Studies show that by improving clinical outcomes and reducing hospital readmission rates, CMM reduces the strain on the health care system. Health IT enables CMM and fosters a health care process designed to consistently identify, manage and resolve medication therapy problems for patients across the continuum of care. This process then can be correlated with patients' overriding changes in health status or health care utilization patterns, thus demonstrating CMM's contribution and value to the nationwide health care system (*J Am Coll Clin Pharm (https://16bvl028dn7zhgp35k7rzh5c-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Outcomes-of-Implementing-and-Integrating-CMM-in-Team-Based-Care-A-Review-of-the-Evidence-on-Quality-Access-and-Costs-11252020.pdf)* 2020;3[6]:1028-1037).

To achieve medication management reform, there must be consensus among providers, payors, patients and policymakers. Our organization, the GTMRx Institute, developed a course of action titled "The GTMRx Blueprint for Change." It is based upon five principles:

1. A personalized, patient-centered, systematic and coordinated approach to medication use will vastly improve outcomes and reduce overall health care costs.

2. We must align systems of care to integrate comprehensive medication management, engaging patients to ensure they are willing and able to take those medications that are indicated, effective and safe, to optimize their outcomes.

3. We need immediate delivery system, payment and policy transformation to streamline clinical trials and reduce the costs of bringing drugs to market while enabling successful, broad-scale adoption of integrated CMM services.

4. Appropriate diagnosis and access to advanced diagnostics with companion/complementary and pharmacogenetics (PGx) testing are essential to target the correct therapy.

5. Success requires team-based, patient-centered care models that recognize appropriately skilled clinical pharmacists as medication experts who work in collaborative practice with physicians and other providers.

We advocate that the Biden administration endorse this road map to deliver policy change focused on team-based health care to get the medications right. Our country is currently plagued by crisis upon crisis: COVID-19, opioid addiction and 27.2% of American adults living with multiple chronic health conditions (CDC Preventing Chronic Disease Research Brief. Vol. 17. Sept 17, 2020). Now is the ideal time for multidisciplinary collaboration and reform centered on CMM to optimize patient care.

Capps is the co-founder and executive director of the GTMRx Institute (https://gtmr.org), a catalyst for change that brings critical stakeholders together, bound by the urgent need to get the medications right.

10 Steps to CMM

1. Identify patients who have not achieved clinical goals of therapy.

2. Understand the patient's personal medication experience, history, preferences and beliefs.

3. Identify actual use patterns of all medications including OTCs, bioactive supplements and prescribed agents.

4. Assess each medication for appropriateness, effectiveness, safety (including drug interactions) and adherence.

5. Identify all drug- therapy problems.

6. Develop a care plan addressing recommended steps, including therapeutic changes needed to achieve optimal outcomes.

7. Ensure patient agrees with and understands care plan.

8. Document all steps and current clinical status versus goals of therapy.

9. Follow-up evaluations are critical to determine effects of medication changes; reassess actual outcomes and recommend further therapeutic changes as needed.

10. CMM is a reiterative process! Care is coordinated with other team members and personalized goals of therapy are understood by all team members.

Source: GTMRx Institute.