

Medication therapy management: Its relationship to patient counseling, disease management, and pharmaceutical care

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Abstract

Objective: To delineate the relationship, including similarities and differences, between medication therapy management (MTM) and contemporary pharmacist-provided services, including patient counseling, disease management, and pharmaceutical care, to facilitate the continued evolution of commonly used language and a standard of practice across geographic areas and practice environments.

Summary: Incorporation of MTM services into the array of Medicare-funded services affords an opportunity for pharmacists to develop direct patient care services in the community. Defining the role of MTM within the scope of pharmacist-provided patient care activities, including patient counseling, disease management, and all currently provided pharmacy services is essential to the delineation of a viable and sustainable practice model for pharmacists. The definitions of each of these services are offered, as well as comparisons and contrasts of the individual services. In addition to Medicare-eligible patients, MTM services are appropriate for anyone with medication-related needs. MTM is offered as an all-encompassing model that incorporates the philosophy of pharmaceutical care, techniques of patient counseling, and disease management in an environment that facilitates the direct collaboration of patients, pharmacists, and other health professionals.

Conclusion: Defining the role of MTM within the current patient care models, including patient counseling, disease management, and all who provide pharmacy services, is essential in delineating a viable and sustainable practice model for pharmacists.

Keywords: Medication therapy management, pharmaceutical care, patient counseling, disease management.

J Am Pharm Assoc. 2007;47:620–628.
doi: 10.1331/JAPhA.2007.06129

Received for publication November 10, 2006, and in revised form February 12, 2007.
Accepted for publication May 30, 2007.

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Disclosure: Dr. Somma McGivney is a faculty consultant to the Rite Aid Corporation for the development of medication therapy management (MTM) services and has received honoraria for her work on advisory panels for the American Pharmacists Association (APhA)/American Society of Consultant Pharmacists MTM Certificate Training Course and the APhA/National Association of Chain Drug Stores Medication Therapy Management Continuing Education Training. Dr. Meyer is the principal investigator on a grant designed to provide MTM training to faculty and preceptors. Dr. Goode has received honoraria for her work as an APhA Immunization Trainer. Drs. Hall and Smith have received an educational grant for their work in designing a diabetes education training course for pharmacists.

Acknowledgments: To Teresa McKaveney and Erik Rueter of the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy for assistance in preparing this manuscript.

The profession of pharmacy has been integral to the delivery of drug therapy to patients since its inception, yet pharmacists commonly have been dissociated from the use, evaluation, and monitoring of drug therapy. The widely cited reports of the Institute of Medicine (IOM)¹⁻⁴ articulate an increased awareness of a lack of continuity of care and associated challenges for the provision of health care in the United States. Society has experienced an increase in adverse drug reactions and drug costs, which has prompted a call for an enhanced role for pharmacists in ensuring effective drug use and patient safety. Recently, the U.S. government has begun to formulate a plan for the Medicare population through the passage of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 and the Medicare Prescription Medication Benefit (Part D), and this incorporates medication therapy management (MTM) services.

The advent of these changes in health care services has raised important questions for patients, pharmacists, other health care professionals, and payers. How do the functions and activities of MTM differ from current pharmacy services? How is MTM similar to or different from patient counseling and disease

management? How are these patient care services related to pharmaceutical care?

Incorporation of MTM services into the array of Medicare-funded services affords an opportunity for pharmacists to develop direct patient care services in the community. The first step toward successfully developing MTM services is to attain an understanding of where MTM fits into the scope of contemporary pharmacy services. This commentary serves to delineate the relationship of MTM to pharmaceutical care, patient counseling, and disease management and suggests a way to envision how each fits into the scope of a pharmacist's patient care activities (Figure 1). A glossary of key terms commonly used by pharmacists when referring to various patient care services is provided in Appendix 1, as it may be useful in developing a uniform understanding by practitioners, patients, and payers.

Defining MTM services

MTM has been defined by the pharmacy profession as "a distinct service or group of services that optimize therapeutic outcomes for individual patients [that] are independent of, but can occur in conjunction with, the provision of a drug product."⁵ Specific desired outcomes of MTM are appropriate drug use, enhanced patient understanding of appropriate drug use, increased patient adherence with prescribed drug therapies, reduced risk of adverse events associated with drugs, and reduced need for other costly medical services.⁵ The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services describes MTM as a mechanism to ensure that "medications prescribed for targeted beneficiaries are appropriately used to optimize therapeutic outcomes and reduce the risk of adverse events."⁶ The American Pharmacists Association and the National Association of Chain Drug Stores Foundation established "core elements" of an MTM service, including medication therapy review, personal medication record, medication action plan, intervention and/or referral, and documentation and follow-up.⁷ These core elements provide a mechanism to accomplish the comprehensive goal of MTM, which is to focus on and create solutions for patient-specific drug therapy problems and collaborate with other health care professionals. The core elements provide the foundation of an MTM service that allows more robust services to be built based on the specific patient needs of a given community.

Pharmaceutical care

In 1990, Hepler and Strand⁸ defined a new way to look at the responsibilities of the pharmacist and pharmacy services, applying the term "pharmaceutical care" to this new concept of pharmacists' services. Over the course of more than a decade, pharmacists have worked to develop pharmaceutical care practices. Many examples of these practices have been published in the literature, suggesting that the inclusion of a pharmacist in the evaluation of a patient's drug therapy regimen improves outcomes.⁹⁻¹³ However, several practice-management barriers have prohibited the widespread adoption and implementation

At a Glance

Synopsis: The Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 and Medicare Part D have raised important questions for patients, pharmacists, other health practitioners, and payers, including how medication therapy management (MTM) differs from pharmaceutical care, patient counseling, and disease management. MTM can be viewed as a comprehensive framework for all drug-focused patient care service components of the practice of the pharmacist. MTM is driven by the philosophy of pharmaceutical care, which calls for the pharmacist to take responsibility and accountability for the drug-related needs of the patient. Patient counseling, in accordance with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990, is the expected service provided by pharmacists to ensure that patients have the information they need to use a specific drug product properly. Disease management programs provide patients with the tools they need to manage a specific disease, often through population-based approaches.

Analysis: Clear definitions of pharmacist-provided services become increasingly important as MTM programs evolve and payer groups become more aware of the benefits associated with safe and efficacious drug use. The professionwide success of effective MTM provision requires not only the willingness of individual pharmacists to master a number of behaviors and techniques, but also acceptance by pharmacy networks, pharmacy organizations, the medical community, the federal government, payer groups, and patients.

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