

Stephen Creasy Talks COST CONTAINMENT

There is light at the tunnel's end. Long-term care facility census is slowly rebounding. However, profit margins continue to be razor thin and staffing shortages linger. More than ever, providers and their teams need high-quality long term care pharmacy services that save time and money, and PharMerica has the tools and resources to help.

ABCs of Exclusive TI

We help our customers save costs through our Therapeutic Interchange (TI) programs. While TI has been around for a long time, PharMerica takes it to a new level.

Our programs are designed by physicians and pharmacists who specialize in geriatrics and long-term care to assure cost-effective and clinically appropriate pharmaceutical care for nursing home residents. "Not only are these programs designed by experienced practitioners, but they are reviewed by our Pharmacy & Therapeutics (P&T) Committee. We make sure each medication is clinically sound and appropriate for this patient population. This involves a deep-dive literature review and assessment before it even gets to P&T for approval or denial. It's a very structured process and unique to PharMerica," says Stephen Creasy, director of clinical services.

At the same time, Stephen says, "Our programs continually evolve. We are always looking for new opportunities to go from higher-cost to lower-cost medications that have demonstrated clinical efficacy and comparable effect. And if new evidence says that a medication is no longer cost-effective or efficacious, we will replace it with a more appropriate drug."

Don't Stop, Won't Stop Cost Containment

Our efforts to contain costs while maximizing outcomes don't stop there. PharMerica's Standard Quantity Level Limits program lowers clients' costs by setting dispensing limits based on quantity or days' supply. This program delivers two distinct advantages to customers. The first is limiting financial exposure on high-cost medications that may not be used, thus reducing waste. The second advantage is that it helps improve nursing facility staff productivity by reducing the time spent on medication returns.

The categories for inclusion of medications in the standard program focus on themes that are particularly prone to waste and/or returns. These include short-stay residents, hospital carry-over therapies, package size opportunities, high cost drugs, and alternative payer opportunities.

This program, says Stephen, "is the backstop to prevent additional waste. It mimics in a way what third party insurance companies do. It allows only so much product to be dispensed – as little as several days' supply." The idea is to help prevent waste without affecting medication availability, particularly with medications that can't be returned such as inhalers, insulin, or eye drops.

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Director of Clinical Services

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We've Got You Coming and Going

Our TI efforts go into effect even before a resident enters a long-term care facility, thus avoiding surprises such as unexpected costs, negative outcomes, or adverse events. Through our Global Authorization program, prescribers can pre-approve interchanges to lower-cost preferred medications for future medication orders, and prescriber-approved forms stay on file at the applicable PharMerica pharmacy for future reference. For states where Global Authorization is not allowed, once the resident enters the facility, PharMerica sends a request to the prescriber to substitute to a lower cost alternative after the initial dispense. In 2020 alone, each drug interchange saved our clients an average \$64 per prescription. "When you look at volume, it really adds up," Stephen points out.

The consultant pharmacist jumps into action at the front end as well, reviewing the patient's records to make sure there is an appropriate diagnosis for every medication supporting a facility's data collection process for the Patient Driven Payment Model. "There is a narrow window to get this right," Stephen says, adding, "If you miss a diagnosis, you miss a reimbursement opportunity."

But it doesn't end there. The consultant pharmacists conduct interim reviews when a resident transfers between settings, such as from assisted living to the nursing home or from the nursing facility to home. And at discharge, PharMerica offers DischargeRx, a program that prepares the resident for a safe return home and provides a 14-30 day supply of their medications. Then PharMerica places a follow-up call to the individual and/or their family within 30 days to check on adherence. "This is a seamless integration process designed to keep each individual on track with their progress. It also helps prevent them from having adverse events that send them to the ER or hospital," says Stephen.

Committed to the Role

Cost containment isn't one-size-fits-all, Stephen stresses. "We work one-on-one with clients. We look at their history and the prescribing patterns of their physicians then customize our efforts based on this information and other facility factors," he says.

At the same time, PharMerica's local dedicated comprehensive pharmacy services teams provide "boots on the ground." They know clients well and have unique, valuable insights into how we can help reach clients' cost-containment goals.

PharMerica takes every opportunity to solve problems, ease burdens, and increase success for its clients, and part of this is providing the best medications for long term care residents at the lowest possible costs.

As Stephen says, "Facilities are looking at opportunities from vendors to lower costs. There are lots of moving parts when it comes to medications and lots of variations and options, often within the same drug class. Our clients appreciate that we take the time to ensure quality while giving them the lowest costs possible." He adds, "At the end of the day, if what we do improves outcomes and enables our customers to be successful, we have accomplished what we set out to do."

To learn more about how PharMerica is the long-term care pharmacy of choice offering innovative, comprehensive pharmacy services, visit PharMerica.com.

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Stephen Creasy, PharmD is the Director of Clinical Services for PharMerica Corporation, where he supports clients through oversight of formularies and cost containment programs while monitoring for clinical updates and regulatory trends to ensure customers are prepared.