

Practice Transformation Prepares You for Opportunity

My friends and family often hear me remark that “you need to be careful what you ask for, because you just might get it”. I say this because you never know when an opportunity is going to come your way in terms of a payer for your services. It can happen, it will happen, and it does happen so the question we all have to ask ourselves is “Are we ready?” This is particularly significant in today’s world of community pharmacy practice in which all of us are seeing our margins decreasing from product distribution. We need to compensate this loss with new revenue which is more than likely going to come from a payer who will pay for the services you provide to their beneficiaries—not necessarily in a fee-for-service contract model—but from a value-based reimbursement model. In this model if we do not perform, we do not get paid and in the more extreme case of at-risk contracts—perhaps monies are even taken away. I cannot emphasize enough that we need to be ready to perform because these contracts are no longer a rare occurrence in community pharmacy and will become more and more prevalent overtime.

The whole goal of Flip the Pharmacy is to help our sites transform their practices to be prepared for these new opportunities—but it requires engagement, work, commitment, and dedication. It requires each one of us to wake up and recommit to the transformation process even when we are overworked, understaffed, and short on time. At all times we have to be ready to perform—especially during the early times of proving ourselves to the payer.

I am reminded about what happened to me several years ago when I challenged our biggest payer in the state to look at community pharmacy in a different way. Their CEO took me up on my challenge and said let’s prove it by doing a twelve-month pilot where they will pay us to manage 600 of their beneficiaries to determine if we can affect financial and clinical metrics. To be honest, I was surprised that they took my challenge and they moved quickly to set the pilot project within a couple of months. What kept me calm during these discussions is that I knew we were ready. We had prepared ourselves for this moment. We knew we had the infrastructure in place to free up our pharmacists by utilizing a robust medication synchronization program with an appointment-based model, optimized the use of our technicians, implemented automation, and had a good working relationship with other providers (the core elements or domains of Flip the Pharmacy). We got off the ground with the pilot ready to perform because we invested in practice transformation—and after twelve months proved that we can not only affect clinical metrics—but we can reduce the total cost of care through appropriate medication management.

Since then, we have successfully implemented a value-based pharmacy program (VBPP) with this payer with another 73 pharmacies. We continue to demonstrate costs savings so that the payer is developing a VBPP benefit to be offered to their customers.

My ask of all of you is to recommit to practice transformation. We have met the challenge of the COVID-19 Pandemic and integrating COVID-19 vaccines in our practices. Now we need to make sure we are managing our patients with Diabetes to ensure that we are reaching therapeutic outcomes with safe and effective medications. We need to be ready for that new opportunity that we cannot see yet—but is just around the corner. It will happen!