

Winds of Change

The winds of change have begun for community pharmacy as we celebrate the historic unanimous decision of the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) in the *Rutledge v. PCMA* case in which they ruled that ERISA cannot be used by Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) as a safeguard against state regulation. Although this ruling may not have immediate change with pharmacy reimbursement, the impact of this ruling and the future of community pharmacy practice cannot be overemphasized. As my cell phone started blowing up with information regarding SCOTUS' ruling, I was filled with much emotion as I realized how long and how hard our profession has fought this battle. Unfortunately, over the years we had too many casualties because of the unfair practices of PBMs. This win is tremendous, but it does not change the need for us all to continue to transform our practices.

I commonly use the phrase “be careful what you ask for, because you just might get it.” The winds of change for community pharmacy have also caught the attention of major stakeholders/decision makers as it relates to the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine. Community pharmacists have been recognized for their ability to administer vaccines and their easy access to the public. Community pharmacy will be a key player during all phases of the COVID-19 vaccination rollout. As a CPESN network, we need to demonstrate our ability to successfully implement a COVID-19 vaccine program within our communities. CPESN Pharmacies are a tremendous solution to many communities including those that are rural with difficult access to other providers. It is our time to shine—but we must be ready, we must be prepared, and we must be ready with processes and procedures so we can do this with maximal efficiencies and effectiveness. This is why Flip the Pharmacy is so key to our success. Pharmacies that have been transforming their practices—implementing change packages, incorporating the different practice domains within their practices—will be optimally prepared.

Another wind of change for community pharmacy has been the work of the Academia-CPESN Transformation (ACT) collaborative. The work of our academic colleagues to help with community pharmacy transformation and incorporation of student pharmacists with community practice transformation initiatives has been tremendous. There has been a false belief that community pharmacists are not clinical. We all know this to be false, but now we have data to prove it. Our academic colleagues collaborating with CPESN-USA will begin to evaluate the data generated and “tell the story” of community pharmacy impacting patient care.

As we come to end of a challenging year that has been filled with frustration, fear, suffering, loss, and stress—we are all probably glad the year is ending—but as we close the year with COVID-19 vaccine rolling out—we must embrace the opportunities that the winds of change have brought to us in 2020.

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