



Take Action

Pharmacists Needed to Help Manage Seniors Taking High-Risk Opioids

Pharmacists Are Part of the Solution

Far beyond “putting pills in a bottle,” pharmacists are moving to practice at the fullest extent of their education and training. Fully leveraging pharmacists, beyond dispensing, as key professionals in healthcare delivery can help Medicare beneficiaries taking high risk opioids remain adherent to their therapy while avoiding addiction.

Pharmacists today help manage a range of chronic diseases by providing medication management, conducting health tests and educating patients on the results, administering immunizations, and partnering with health systems and other providers to advance health and wellness. Pharmacists can bring this same clinical expertise to help address the opioid crisis.

Walgreens strongly supports legislative action to recognize pharmacists as non-physician providers under Medicare Part B to specifically provide opioid-related clinical services, upon physician referral, to beneficiaries taking high dose opioids (90 MME per day and above). Specifically, under direction from a prescribing physician, pharmacists would provide risk factor reduction and opioid antagonist counseling services to ensure those patients mitigate their risk of becoming addicted to their prescription opioids as well as knowing what to do if there is an overdose event.

MME: Morphine Milligram Equivalent



The United States is in the midst of an epidemic of prescription opioid overdoses—devastating lives, families and communities

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Approximately one-third of Medicare beneficiaries received a prescription opioid in 2017, with approximately 460,000 of those receiving high dosage levels

40

More than 115 people die every day from opioid-related overdoses, 40 of which involve prescription opioids

4x

The amount of opioids prescribed and sold in the U.S. quadrupled since 1999, but the overall amount of pain reported by Americans has not changed

Source: HHS, Office of the Inspector General, June 2018

We Urge Congress



To support legislation to expand access to Medicare beneficiaries taking high risk opioids by recognizing pharmacists as non-physician providers for the provision of specific opioid-related clinical services