

AAFP DEFINES ROLE OF PHARMACISTS AND FAMILY PHYSICIANS

In January 2012 the American Academy of Family Physicians issued a revised position paper to help define the professional relationship between pharmacists and family physicians in an integrated health care delivery system.

The revised paper is a response to increased efforts by pharmacists to expand their influence and scope of practice.

The AAFP recognizes the “evolving complexity and proliferation of pharmaceutical agents and the important role pharmacists play in the delivery of high quality health care,” says the position paper. And “The AAFP supports arrangements where the pharmacist is part of an integrated team-based approach to care.”

However, the paper adds, the AAFP believes “only licensed doctors of medicine, osteopathy, dentistry and podiatry should have the statutory authority to prescribe drugs for human consumption.”

“Expanded roles for pharmacists have been promoted via legislative and regulatory action,” notes the Academy’s position paper. “Currently, 46 states have collaborative drug therapy management legislation or regulations. These laws allow physicians to pharmacists to enter into voluntary written agreements to manage the drug therapy of a patient or a group of patients.”

“In a collaborative environment, the pharmacist is the logical member of a team and is qualified to deal with issues of medication use, medication efficacy and patterns of medication use,” says the paper. However, “independent prescription authority for pharmacists will further fragment the American health care system and will undermine the national goals of integrate, accountable care and models, such as patient-centered medical home.

The paper also points out that the concept of coordinated and team-based care lies at the core of integrated care models, such as the patient-centered medical home and accountable care organizations. Within this framework, “there is a growing body of evidence that medication management program can made positive contributions to patient health. In many of these studies pharmacists lead the medication management program.”

According to the paper, pharmacists “have an important role in providing directions to patients seeking advice on over-the-counter medications. For the patient seeking nonprescription medication, the pharmacist is positioned to determine the presence of allergies as well as adverse reactions between prescription and over-the-counter medications,” says AAFP policy.

“However, AAFP recommends that vaccine administration be provided in the medical home setting. When vaccines are administered elsewhere, the information should be transmitted back to the patient’s primary care physician so that there is a complete vaccination record.