

About the PCMA Health Equity Workgroup

Overview

Reflecting the increased and necessary focus on health disparities that occur across the lifespan and continuum of health care interactions, the Pharmaceutical Care Management Association's (PCMA's) Board of Directors identified addressing the impact of racial and other health disparities on prescription drug access and quality of care as a strategic priority. In early 2021, PCMA launched a Health Equity Workgroup comprised of leading clinical, pharmacy, and social determinants of health leaders of the Association's pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) member companies. This workgroup will identify organizational and structural solutions to address systemic health disparities, including preparing policy and practice recommendations by late May 2021.

Goals

- **Identify** challenges and structural issues within current formulary, benefit design, and pharmacy network processes that may lead to, or exacerbate, health disparities or inequities, as well as opportunities for PBMs to help address or mitigate disparities;
- **Share** promising practices, viable solutions, and other examples of PBM industry leadership to promote health equity and reduce disparities in the use of, and access to, prescription drugs and related therapies; and
- **Recommend** potential policy solutions or practical interventions to address disparities and inequities in prescription drug access and quality of care.

Principle on Addressing Health Inequities and Disparities in Care

In July 2020, the PCMA Board of Directors approved as a strategic priority a formal *Policy Principle on Addressing Health Inequities and Disparities in Care*, which states:

People of color and other marginalized groups experience a continuum of systemic discrimination and injustice that result in ongoing inequities and disparities in care.

- PCMA acknowledges health care disparities result from a complex mix of social, cultural, economic, political, environmental, and other factors. Therefore, policies and practices to address disparities should be comprehensive and inclusive.
- PCMA supports policies that promote equitable, affordable, effective, safe, medically appropriate, and high-quality pharmacy care for all regardless of a person's individual characteristics and circumstances, including race and ethnicity, sex, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, economic status, national origin or immigration status, religion, or language.
- PCMA believes pharmacy care should be patient-focused as well as culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Focus Areas

1. **Identify potential structural issues within the current pharmacy benefit, formulary, utilization management program design, pharmacy network development, and operational processes** that may further, rather than mitigate, health disparities or inequities in prescription drug access and quality of care.

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2. **Improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of information about patients served by PBMs to identify and address health disparities**, including improved data standardization and collection within a current-law framework and national standards.
3. **Identify solutions to reduce or help mitigate disparities in medication use and adherence and promote equity**, including by advancing clinically driven and evidence-based pharmacy care management tools, gaining a better understanding of promising practices that can decrease disparities related to formulary design and utilization management policies, and applying or disseminating potential or viable solutions.
4. **Promote equitable access to pharmacy services for underserved communities**, including through support of mechanisms and efforts that promote reasonable access to a pharmacy in historically underserved communities.
5. **Develop training and resource programs to address anti-racism and other forms of implicit bias (that may promulgate systemic health disparities and inequities) for PBMs' workforce**, including managed care pharmacists, other clinical leaders, and Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee members.

Workgroup Membership

Angela Banks

Vice President, External Affairs, UnitedHealth

Wendy Bailey

Vice President, Health Plan Pharmacy Strategy, Envolve

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