

Prescription Policy Choices

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*Academic
Detailing
Planning
Initiative
Executive
Summary*

Prescription Policy Choices

*A Template for Establishing and Administering
Prescriber Support and Education Programs:
A Collaborative, Service-based Approach
for Achieving Maximum Impact*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Academic Detailing Planning Initiative

Prescriptions Policy Choices convened key stakeholders including state medical society leadership, state policy makers, advocates and experts from existing academic detailing programs for the Academic Detailing Planning Initiative (ADPI) in order to explore opportunities for collaboration between prescriber education programs in Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire.

The project began with an Academic Detailing Informational Summit in order to identify current best practices in academic detailing. From there, working groups identified a large range of possible points of collaboration with the potential to maximize the impact of limited resources. This template catalogues these opportunities for collaboration and represents a planning document which can be adapted to suit the needs of specific programs. Though it was created as guidance for Northern New England, it will be of use to any emerging program.

As a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational and public policy organization, Prescription Policy Choices (PPC) provides objective research, information, and on-the-ground expertise on prescription drug policy. Our research and policy focus is evaluating alternative policies and programs that effectively reduce prescription drug prices and increase access to medications. PPC's research and education work encompasses a variety of policy issues, particularly evidenced-based prescription drug prescribing, including academic detailing.

Academic Detailing: A Quality-Driven Service with the Ability to Manage Costs

Academic detailing, also known as prescriber support and education, is the service of sending trained clinicians to physician's offices in order to present the best available, objective scientific evidence in a given therapeutic area. Such encounters promote the most appropriate, clinically judicious use of prescription drugs as well as positive overall patient care practices. Though academic detailing is foremost a quality-driven endeavor, it has also demonstrated an ability to control costs while improving quality. This ability represents an important alignment of the interests of patients, physicians and payers.

Lessons from Existing Programs: You Can Do a Lot with a Little

Presentations from existing programs in Pennsylvania, Vermont, South Carolina, Canada and Australia reflected a wide range in scale between programs. While well-financed, flagship programs such as Pennsylvania's are having a strong, measurable impact, smaller programs such as Vermont's demonstrate that significant success can be achieved even with limited resources. Smaller programs can begin to approach the economies of scale and impact of larger programs by adopting a collaborative approach.

Areas for Collaboration

The template outlines a range of areas for collaboration.

Clinical modules

The development of the clinical modules which serve as the basis for academic detailing is well suited to a collaborative approach. In order to maximize resources, programs should consider ways to collaborate on:

- identifying clinical topics for focus;
- conducting literature reviews;
- developing key messages and physician and patient educational materials; and
- training academic detailers on communication skills and clinical content.

Delivery mechanisms

Programs should explore existing channels which can be leveraged for the efficient delivery of academic detailing. The project identified Area Health Education Centers (AHECs), continuing medical education (CME) programs and evidence-based medicine (EBM) initiatives as existing infrastructures which may be appropriate for this role.

Program administration

The challenges of program administration, from recruiting skilled clinicians to managing them in the field, can be efficiently managed with a collaborative approach. For example, programs can benefit from existing software which has been adapted for purposes of data management and cost accounting related to academic detailing.

Financing

The project explored a range of potential financing mechanisms including manufacturer labeler fees, pharmaceutical sales representative licensing fees, foundation support for seed money, pharmaceutical industry settlement funds, and Medicaid matching funds. Establishing a consortium of commercial insurers to pay into a pooled fund was also put forward as an idea with the caveat that the program should operate independently of its funding source.

Creative approaches to financing coupled with a collaborative approach to clinical module development, training and program administration, can help realize the potential of academic detailing to better align the way drugs are prescribed with the best available scientific evidence. This will ultimately benefit patients, physicians and payers.

The findings of the Academic Detailing Planning Initiative are available in a report at www.policychoices.org. For more information, contact Executive Director Ann Woloson at awoloson@policychoices.org or ADPI Project Manager Jennifer Reck at jreck@policychoices.org.

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