



## Expand Patient Access to Pharmacists Services

An aging population, increases in chronic conditions, expanded insurance coverage and a shortage of primary care physicians are creating greater potential for unmet healthcare needs—particularly in medically underserved communities.

Over the next two decades, the number of people on Medicare is projected to rise from roughly 50 million to over 80 million. In addition, approximately half of Americans have at least one chronic condition, and 26% have multiple chronic conditions. As such, it is not surprising that three-quarters of our nation's annual healthcare expenditures are attributed to costs associated with chronic disease. And based on current projections, the occurrence of chronic disease and associated costs will only worsen.

Further, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates approximately 37 million additional people will have insurance coverage as a result of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). The challenge, as projected by the Association of American Medical Colleges, is by 2020 there will be more than 91,000 fewer doctors than needed to meet the growing demand. This confluence represents a situation that must utilize all available healthcare professionals to their fullest in order to adequately manage the growing pressures and demands on the nation's healthcare system.

### 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 as key professionals in healthcare delivery will help address the perfect storm of physician shortages and growing demands.

Pharmacists have a proven record of cost savings in the Medicare program. The CBO recently estimated that a 1% increase in drug utilization (Part D) would cause Medicare's spending on medical services (Part B) to fall by roughly one-fifth of 1%. Arguably, pharmacists' direct participation in the Medicare Part B program as non-physician providers would likely magnify cost savings in the overall Medicare program, as well as produce savings across the entire healthcare system.

Pharmacists today are helping to manage chronic diseases and providing medication management, conducting health tests and educating patients on the results, administering immunizations, and partnering with health systems to advance health and wellness as well as hospitals to reduce readmissions.

Walgreens strongly supports legislative action to recognize pharmacists as non-physician providers under Medicare Part B. The *Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act* (H.R. 592 and S. 314) would enable pharmacists greater ability to provide services consistent with state scope of practice laws to address the unmet healthcare needs of Medicare beneficiaries in medically underserved communities across the country.

### We Urge Congress...

- To co-sponsor and pass legislation (H.R. 592 and S. 314) to expand access for Medicare beneficiaries by recognizing pharmacists as non-physician providers in medically underserved communities.

### Key Facts

- An aging population, increases in chronic disease, a physician shortage and expanded coverage are creating greater potential for unmet healthcare need.
- Fully leveraging pharmacists as key professionals in healthcare delivery will help address the perfect storm of physician shortages and growing demands.
- CBO estimates that pharmacists produce cost savings in Medicare—a 1% increase in drug utilization causes spending on medical services to fall by 0.2%.
- Pharmacists' participation in the Medicare Part B program as a non-physician provider would likely magnify cost savings in the overall Medicare program.