MANAGED CARE PHARMACY EDUCATION AT MCP

Managed care is a concept here to stay, and it will control an ever-increasing segment of our health care delivery system. As a result, health professional schools, including pharmacy, have a responsibility to ensure that graduates of their programs have at least a basic understanding of managed care principles.

In Boston, we often say that changes in pharmacy in the United States move from west to east. With respect to managed care pharmacy, we have tried to alter this precept. At the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences, we have made a commitment to provide leadership in managed care pharmacy education. To that end, we have developed required and elective didactic courses, experiential rotations, postgraduate residencies, and fellowships to ensure that our graduates are prepared to practice in a health care environment in which managed care plays a prominent role.

Students in both our baccalaureate and track-in Pharm.D. programs are first exposed to managed care in a health care systems course required of second year students (second preprofessional year in our 0-5 and 0-6 programs). The managed care module in this course includes a basic discussion of managed care principles, terminology (e.g., prospective reimbursement, capitation), and models (e.g., HMO,

PPO, IPA).

Students are required that same year to take a course in pharmacy management in which managed care is explored from the business perspective.

Fourth-year students (second professional year) take a course in pharmacy ethics that addresses specific issues in managed care such as "freedom of choice." For those students with a greater interest in managed care, an elective, computer-assisted, managed care course, developed by a MCP/AHS faculty member, provides a more in-depth discussion of managed care concepts and systems.

The experiential educational component of our curriculum includes both ambulatory externships and clinical clerkships at managed care sites. Currently, MCP/AHS students are required to complete a five-week hospital externship, a five-week ambulatory externship, and an eight-week clinical clerkship.

Because of the absence of hospitals managed or owned by managed care organizations in the greater Boston area, we have been unable to establish externship rotations in acute managed care. However, our ambulatory externship program has several well-established rotations at managed care sites, including Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and HMO Blue/Medical West. The externship rotations at these sites allow the students to see practical applications

of managed care principles as they relate to drug distribution, formulary management, and patient care.

Clinical clerkship rotations at managed care sites are also available to MCP/AHS students. At these sites, students are exposed to the diagnosis and treatment of disease from a managed care perspective.

During the next academic year, the college will switch from a quarter to a semester system. The externship and clerkship programs will be merged into a single 16-week experiential rotation. With this change, the use of managed care sites for experiential instruction, which can provide students with both distributive and clinical experiences, will become even more commonplace.

MCP/AHS offers one of the few postgraduate managed care pharmacy residencies in the United States. The residency is a partnership between the College and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and is currently in its fourth year. The goal of the one-year program is to prepare individuals who will assume important roles in managed care pharmacy practice. Residents complete both administrative and clinical rotations, take several postgraduate courses, teach in an undergraduate laboratory, and complete one or more projects, both research-based and nonresearch-based.

More recently, the College has begun a postgradu-

ate, research fellowship in conjunction with the Institute for Contemporary Pharmacy Research and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Managed Group Division. The fellowship focuses on research in managed care and is currently completing its first year.

The Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences is committed to providing educational experiences to its students in all areas of contemporary pharmacy practice. Managed care pharmacy is and will continue to be an important part of this commitment to a broad-based pharmacy education.

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