Managed Care and The University of Texas College of Pharmacy

The University of Texas College of Pharmacy teaches about managed care at three levels: Pharm.D., Option II M.S., and full-time M.S./Ph.D. In addition, the Center for Pharmacoeconomic Studies, which is associated with the College of Pharmacy, often collaborates with managed care organizations (MCOs).

Pharm.D. Level

The University of Texas College of Pharmacy admits about 120 Pharm.D. students each year. They learn about important managed care issues in both required and elective courses. In the required course Pharmacy Administration II, 16 classroom hours are spent on introduction and background to managed care, control mechanisms used in managed care, MCOs, pharmacy benefit management companies, Medicare, Medicaid, and how managed care affects pharmacy practice.

Another 12 classroom hours are spent covering the U.S. health care system, including material related to managed health care. Throughout the required Pharmacoeconomics course, concepts related to decision making in managed care settings are covered. Students critique published pharmacoeconomic studies. An in-class exercise using Microsoft TreeAge software is used to demonstrate the role of decision analysis in decision making and three classroom hours are spent specifically comparing the advantages and disadvantages of pharmacoeconomic research in institutions, pharmacy benefit management settings, and managed care systems.

M.S. Level—Option II

Every other year The University of Texas College of Pharmacy admits about 10 part-time students into an Option II M.S. program. These students typically are working full-time as pharmacists and attend classes one weekend a month for two years. Managed care is covered in the Advanced Community Pharmacy Management and the Advanced Institutional Pharmacy Management courses.

M.S./Ph.D. Level

Currently, there are 25 full-time graduate students in our M.S./Ph.D. programs in pharmacy practice and pharmacy administration. These students must take general courses, such as statistics, research design, and data analysis, that support their research and must minor in a related field, such as marketing, management, health policy, psychometrics, or economics.

One graduate elective course taught by Dr. Kenneth Lawson covers risk and insurance, an overview of the U.S. health care system, MCOs, control mechanisms used by MCOs, Medicaid and Medicare managed care, drug benefit design, pharmacy payment systems, pharmacy benefit management companies, formularies and other pharmacy-specific control mechanisms, and managed health care system outcomes.

Students may also take courses elsewhere in the university. The Red McComb's School of Business offers a health care management track on managerial issues, organizational structure, and decision making related to health care and managed care systems. The Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs offers courses on public and health care policy.

Many M.S. and Ph.D. research projects look at issues that relate to managed care systems. For example, we have conducted studies in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Defense system, the Texas Medicaid system, the Alamo Mental Health Group, the Scott and White Health Plan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas, and Humana.

The Center for Pharmacoeconomic Studies

The Center for Pharmacoeconomic Studies conducts economic and policy research on how pharmaceutical services and products affect patient quality of life and health care outcomes in Texas and across the country. The Center brings researchers together from different sectors of the health care delivery system, in addition to fostering collaborations with other academic institutions to disseminate scholarly findings. Researchers at

the Center provide expertise in study design, methodology, data collection and analysis, and interpretation of economic and policy research. The Center also designs and presents educational programming to further the understanding of pharmacoeconomics and its role in health care decision making.

The Center has conducted studies from the perspective of managed care payers and providers. For instance, it evaluated access to and costs of prescription and medical services for Texas Medicaid recipients who were moved from fee-for-service to managed care plans. Currently, the Center is conducting a study for the Texas NorthSTAR pilot program that coordinates mental health services for Medicaid and indigent patients previously in a traditional fee-for-service program. Researchers are studying how the use of new-generation antipsychotics affects rehospitalization rates, inpatient lengths of stay, and physician visits, asking whether the more expensive new medications are offsetting costs in other components of mental health services. Initial results suggest a slowing of inpatient hospital rates as use of the new medications increases.

Conclusion

Some colleges of pharmacy are adding courses that address managed care systems and issues while others are incorporating them into existing courses.¹ The University of Texas College of Pharmacy is providing information relating to managed care for both undergraduate and graduate pharmacy students, and collaborating on research projects with MCOs. ■

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1. Rascati KL, Gagnon JP. Pharmacoeconomics education, managed care and the pharmaceutical industry: Report from a panel discussion. *Am J Pharm Ed* 1999 (Winter); 63: 449–53.