COVID-Related Economic Distress Threatens Front-Line Nursing Home Pharmacies, Vulnerable Seniors Under Their Care

Economic, Regulatory Challenges Jeopardize Ongoing Viability of LTC Pharmacy Sector; Now Surveying Membership Crises, SCPC Calls on Congress and Administration to Act

Washington, DC, April 20, 2020 --(PR.com)-- Warning that seniors in nursing homes face undue risk of losing uninterrupted access to life-saving medications and higher risk of COVID-19 exposure because of accumulating economic stress on the nation’s long-term care (LTC) pharmacy sector and insurance company rules inappropriate for effective crisis response, the Senior Care Pharmacy Coalition (SCPC) today called on Congress and the Administration to take immediate steps to provide meaningful financial aid to LTC pharmacies and eliminate administrative obstacles to ensure vulnerable seniors receive the ongoing care they require through this crisis.

Pointing out that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act has yielded no relief for LTC pharmacies, SCPC President and CEO Alan G. Rosenbloom said SCPC membership nationwide is reporting economic, regulatory, workforce and other challenges negatively impacting front-line nursing home pharmacies’ ongoing ability to sustain key clinical and medication management functions necessary to protect patients.

“A confluence of devastating economic and regulatory variables has created a ‘perfect storm’ for our members, placing this key pharmacy sector and the front-line pharmacists, responsible for ensuring vulnerable nursing home patients maintain uninterrupted access to their daily average of 8 to 9 prescription medications, at risk,” warned Rosenbloom. “During a public health emergency of this unprecedented magnitude, maintaining the medication-management regime necessary to protect seniors from potentially fatal drug-interactions in LTC settings is essential.”

SCPC will release new data as it becomes available, however, the statistics below represent a majority of member responses.

Economic Distress: Economic distress impacting the LTC pharmacy sector and its front-line pharmacists has manifested itself in the following ways, according to SCPC’s ongoing membership survey:

- In March, average LTC pharmacy revenues dropped 15 percent or more and areas hit hardest by the crisis saw decreases of 20-25 percent. Comparatively, retail businesses across the country saw a drop of about 8.7 percent.

- Revenue will continue to decrease in April and May and is likely to continue to decline until hospital admissions rebound, which could take the rest of the year or longer.

- Overall operation costs are up as much as 6 percent or more across the country as LTC pharmacies have seen significant cost increases driven by PPE acquisition, social distancing measures, increased on-site supplies to offset possible shortages and necessary enhanced infection control and sanitation protocols.
- Workforce layoffs of non-essential employees and reduced wages have already been implemented with more employment austerity measures expected.

Administrative Obstacles: Several problematic regulatory issues are also undermining the ability of front-line LTC pharmacies to perform their duties. Prior authorization policies, primarily designed to save insurance companies money, and other administrative time-consuming measures for authorizing coverage remain in place despite the crisis and increased demand on staff time and pharmacy resources.

"At the moment, doctors in nursing homes do not have the time to check boxes on extraneous administrative paperwork, but insurance companies continue to demand it and are even extending this requirement to crucial coronavirus treatments," Rosenbloom noted. "Essential drugs, like hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin that are used to treat this disease, have been added to prior authorization lists in just the past two weeks."

"Seniors in America's nursing homes are most at risk from COVID-19. Supporting the safety and viability of LTC pharmacies and their front-line pharmacists is necessary to prevent this catastrophic situation from getting worse," the SCPC leader concluded. "Immediate help from Congress and the Administration is warranted now and America's seniors deserve no less."

The Senior Care Pharmacy Coalition (SCPC) is the only national organization exclusively representing the interests of LTC pharmacies. Its members operate in all 50 states and serve 850,000 patients daily in skilled nursing and assisted living facilities across the country. Visit seniorcarepharmacies.org to learn more.
Contact Information:
Senior Care Pharmacy Coalition
Sarah Feagan
703-543-9180
Contact via Email
http://seniorcarepharmacies.org/

Online Version of Press Release:
You can read the online version of this press release at: https://www.pr.com/press-release/810647