MPhA strongly supports the implementation of health care homes that incorporate and fully utilize the medication expertise of pharmacists.

The health care home, also known as the medical home, is a concept first developed by the American College of Pediatrics in 1967. The health care home is a model of care centered on the patient at the primary and preventative level of care. Each patient will have a primary care provider that will oversee all treatment. The primary care provider will work closely with an interdisciplinary team that will include pharmacists, nurses, dieticians, and other related health care professionals.

The goals of the health care home model are to:

- Link the American public to a patient-specific interdisciplinary team of health care professionals.
- Implement preventative care more effectively and at an earlier stage.
- Reduce adverse events in health care, such as medication errors, drug interactions, and preventable deaths.
- Increase patient and health care provider overall satisfaction with primary care.
- Reduce overall health care expenditures in the U.S. and improve quality of care.
- Prevent unnecessary inpatient hospitalizations and decrease lengths of stay.

PHARMACISTS’ ROLE IN THE HEALTH CARE HOME

Inclusion of pharmacists within the health care home interdisciplinary team is essential to achieve the goals of this model. Roughly 76 billion dollars in health care expenditures could be saved and 120,000 deaths per year could be prevented if pharmacists were more fully utilized in community health care.¹ In Minnesota specifically, the Minnesota MTM Care Program estimated that pharmacist-provided MTM services decreased health care costs from $11,965 to $8,197 per patient per year.² One study showed that a pharmacist-physician team-based approach to managing high blood pressure more than doubled the proportion of patients with their blood pressure under control compared with traditional family medicine practices (64% vs. 30%).³

The pharmacist’s role on the interdisciplinary team is to:

- Serve as a medication expert who provides vital medication therapy management (MTM) services for prescription and over-the-counter medications, including comprehensive drug therapy evaluation to ensure efficacy, safety and appropriateness of medication use in order to improve overall quality of care.
- Reduce the risk of adverse events by screening for drug interactions, identifying unnecessary or suboptimal medications, and suggesting additional or alternative drug therapy when needed to prevent future problems.
- Be a drug therapy resource providing evidence-based recommendations on the safest most effective treatments to patients and interdisciplinary team members.
- Enhance patient outcomes as demonstrated by the Asheville Project and Diabetes Ten City Challenge which showed improvement in patient health outcomes with decreased overall health care cost.²

Health care homes are intended to provide a solution to the gap in care at the primary care level. A dedicated team of interdisciplinary health care providers for each patient will personalize medicine, resulting in improved long-term health care outcomes.

MPhA urges policy makers to ensure that all health care reform initiatives, including the implementation of the health care home model, incorporates and fully utilizes the medication expertise of pharmacists.

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² Improving Medication Use Lowering Health Care Costs. American Pharmacists Association; 2009