



Continuing Education



Emerging issues in the 21st century

Learning Objectives

Describe issues that influence the patient-physician relationship and strategies to support this relationship.

Describe the challenges of treating an aging patient population and ways to help physicians in this area.

Explain the HIPAA regulations and strategies to help physicians comply with these rules.

Describe ways to understand physicians' motivations and develop appropriate sales strategies.

Identify further opportunities for partnering with physicians.

This final article in a three-part series discusses emerging issues for the 21st century physician, including patient-physician interaction, the aging population and the impact of HIPAA regulations, as well as relationship building with physicians and partnering opportunities.

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Patient-physician interaction

Healthcare representatives need to be aware of how physicians' interactions with patients are being influenced by the growing use of the Internet, direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising, the need for effective communication skills and managed care.

The Internet. Physicians may ask representatives questions about Web-based information brought to them by patients. Therefore, it is important to stay informed about where products are mentioned on the Internet and how they are positioned. Also, physicians and their staff will appreciate guidelines on how to use technology to gather and record appropriate information and communicate efficiently via e-mail.

DTC advertising. This type of advertising helps consumers stay informed about the latest pharmaceutical developments and increases general awareness of many medical conditions. Pharmaceutical company managers and healthcare representatives must be aware of which products their companies promote through DTC advertising, as well as which competitive products are promoted in this way. They should

then be prepared to discuss the clinical data for the promoted products in more detail with physicians. They should also provide patient education materials to help physicians better communicate with patients regarding their conditions and appropriate treatment.

Communication skills. Compliance is enhanced when patients are given clear, understandable information about their conditions in a sincere, responsive manner. Furthermore, effective communication skills result in more accurate diagnoses, time efficiency, patient compliance and a reduced risk of malpractice. In most cases, the final diagnosis of a patient's condition is made based on information received from the patient. The same types of communication skills needed by physicians are also needed by pharmaceutical company managers and healthcare representatives to effectively interact with 21st century physicians.

Managed care. Under managed care, patients are limited to physicians who are affiliated with their insurance plan. In some cases, patients are required to change from a physician they are comfortable with to one they do not know. This can result in an uncomfortable situation for both the patient and the physician.

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Continuing Education in Pharmaceutical Representative aims to provide reps with information to help them meet the needs of the people they serve and to contribute to reps' personal and professional development. Every third issue includes a self-assessment quiz covering the previous three Continuing Education articles. The quiz for this article appears in this issue. Reps who correctly complete the quiz and return it to the CMR Institute with a nominal handling fee will receive a completion recognition form showing that they have successfully completed the three-part educational series and earned .25 CEU (2.5 contact hours). The CMR Institute also will send a letter of recognition to reps' managers upon completion of a quarterly series. A Certificate of Achievement will be awarded to any representative who successfully completes four quizzes or has obtained 1.0 CEU.

Note: The Continuing Education quizzes are not part of CMR Institute's certification program and do not count as credits toward the CMR® designation.

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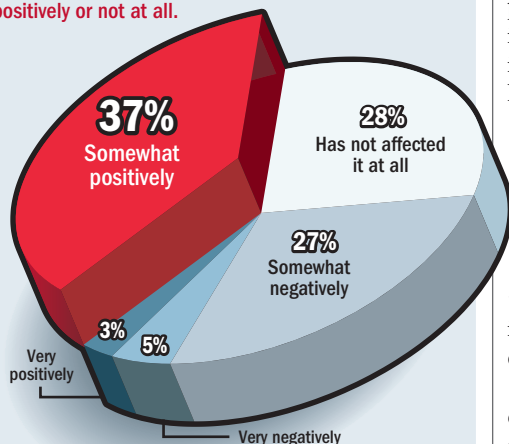
The Certified Medical Representatives Institute is an independent non-profit educational organization established in 1966 to provide a source of professional development and certification for pharmaceutical representatives. The institute provides an up-to-date, approved continuing education curriculum designed to expand and enhance internal company training and development in a cost-effective manner. The curriculum concentrates on providing a general knowledge base and avoids such areas as selling skills and specific product education.

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Figure 1

Overall impact of DTC advertising on patients and practice

When asked, "Overall, how would you say DTC advertising has affected your patients and your practice?" most physicians said it affected them positively or not at all.



Source: Food and Drug Administration, Division of Drug Marketing, Advertising and Communication, 2002

The aging patient population

Physicians typically treat many older patients for several chronic conditions at one time, and the high costs associated with treating these patients are continuing to grow. In response to the challenges posed by the aging population, health agencies and community organizations are encouraged to offer patient education programs. These programs are designed to promote healthy lifestyles in older adults, prevent disability, maintain capacity in those with disabilities and enhance quality of life. Managers and healthcare representatives can also help physicians by providing them with patient education materials or programs to assist them in educating or training patients with chronic illness.

Medical insurance for patients in this age group is provided by Medicare. Unfortunately, the reimbursement rates paid to physicians are not keeping up with inflation, and physician practice costs exceed Medicare payments by 13%. Physicians also have to keep up with the ever-changing rules and provider guidelines and complete excessive paperwork for each patient, taking time away from patient care. Managers and healthcare representatives should obtain the most updated Medicare regulations to become familiar with reimbursement issues and regulatory and billing requirements. They can then keep busy physicians updated with the latest information and offer suggestions for efficiently completing paperwork. They might provide company-sponsored, printed educational materials or a CD-ROM on coding and maximizing fees for specific services for diseases on which the pharmaceutical company focuses.

The impact of HIPAA regulations

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which took effect April 14, 2003, provides patients with greater access to their medical records and more control over how their health information is used. This federal rule requires healthcare providers and health plans to protect patients' personal health information stored in both electronic and paper formats. The rule affects all practicing physicians who conduct medical business; this includes electronic billing, even if contracted out. It is intended to be a baseline standard that protects all Americans; it establishes a federal minimum, not a ceiling.

Physician practices must make sure that all patients receive a privacy notice and that the notice is posted in a prominent place within the office or at the site of service. The notice must tell patients who may see and use their medical records, what uses require their authorization, and that they have the right to inspect, copy and amend their records and obtain an accounting of the disclosures. It must also contain the name, title and telephone number of the person to contact regarding privacy issues. The physician practice must also provide an authorization form to disclose health information – written in plain, understandable language.

A new HIPAA rule that took effect in April 2005 requires providers to ensure the security of their electronic data transmissions. Healthcare groups and organizations are concerned that the information technology investment required for HIPAA compliance will be arduous, costly and time-consuming and will impact established technological programs that already disseminate patient information.

The HIPAA regulations are complex and have gone through three different versions in the past two years, and many physicians need assistance in understanding their responsibilities. In response, a new group of HIPAA consultants has evolved to help physician-run practices understand how to comply with the new regulations. The complexity of these regulations may provide an opportunity for pharmaceutical companies to provide their own HIPAA consultants or seminars on HIPAA regulations to help physicians understand and implement the new patient privacy rule.

Building relationships

Healthcare representatives must be versatile and have the ability to adapt their behavior and presentations to meet the concerns and expectations of each physician on whom they call.

Physicians take different career paths, which result in different motivations and expectations. These paths may be defined as:

- **Linear:** Physicians who follow this path focus on upward mobility; their motivation is power and achievement.
- **Expert:** Those on this career path concentrate on becoming increasingly skilled and as proficient as possible in their fields.
- **Spiral:** These physicians seek to broaden their knowledge, skills and expertise over time; their key motivation is personal growth.
- **Transitory:** This path is characterized by inconsistency and frequent change in types of work; the primary motivations include novelty, independence and involvement with people.

It is important to keep in mind that not all physicians' career paths or motivations are clearly defined; many choose a hybrid career path that combines different types of paths.

The personality traits of physicians can provide clues to the types of sales strategies that may be most effective. Examples of traits and possible strategies include:

- **Authoritarian and confident:** Representatives can offer product samples, comparisons of product usage rate versus competitive drugs, and new clinical data that clearly show advantages for a product; they should use a confident and straightforward manner.

- **Detail-oriented and argumentative:** Representatives should have copies of all pertinent clinical studies readily available, know and be able to discuss clinical study details, and be prepared to discuss the diseases for which their products are indicated as well as all available treatments.
- **Focused on market share and perks:** Representatives can offer assistance that is consistent with the guidelines established by the Washington-based Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, provide financial information about the disease category or drug class, and share the latest market information for specific products.
- **Disorganized and rushed:** Representatives can identify and provide office management resources, provide samples and educational materials for the patient, and become knowledgeable about public or pharmaceutical company-funded patient education, disease prevention or healthy lifestyle programs.

Physicians seldom fit into just one of the described categories; however, one of these personality traits may be more dominant than another and, for observant healthcare representatives, will provide clues as to how to best approach these physicians.

The key to building successful, trusting relationships with physicians is knowing what they want from healthcare representatives. According to surveys, physicians have indicated a desire for:

- Balanced information.
- Educational information.
- Better scientific information.
- New information and information they can use to assist patients.
- Cost-effectiveness analysis.
- Continuing medical education opportunities.

Partnering opportunities

The 21st century physician faces challenges in the areas of managed healthcare, information technology, malpractice insurance and patient issues. There are many opportunities for managers and healthcare representatives to partner with physicians by providing them with materials or programs to assist them in facing these challenges.

The following are managed healthcare cost-containment mechanisms, along with appropriate partnering strategies for the healthcare representative:

- **Tiered formularies (with several copayment levels):** Representatives can provide physicians and managed care organizations with the results of pharmacoeconomic studies that demonstrate specific outcomes.
- **Disease management programs and clinical practice guidelines:** Representatives can offer specifically targeted disease management materials or services directly related to their areas of expertise or offer speaker programs with recognized experts.
- **Risk-sharing financial arrangements:** Representatives can provide educational materials to help physicians learn more about the financial aspects

Article Summary

- **Healthcare representatives need to be aware of how physicians' interactions with patients are being influenced by the growing use of the Internet, DTC advertising, the need for effective communication skills and managed care.**
- **Physicians treating many older patients for multiple chronic conditions face rising costs and complex Medicare regulations and paperwork.**
 - Healthcare representatives should become familiar with Medicare regulations and provide physicians with appropriate educational materials.
- **HIPAA provides patients with greater access to their medical records and more control over how their health information is used.**
 - HIPAA regulations are complex, and many physicians need assistance in understanding their responsibilities.
 - Pharmaceutical companies can help by providing their own HIPAA consultants or seminars on HIPAA regulations.
- **Healthcare representatives must be versatile and able to adapt their behavior and presentations to meet the concerns and expectations of each physician.**
 - Physicians take different career paths, which result in different motivations and expectations.
 - Physicians' personality traits can provide clues to the types of sales strategies that may be most effective.
- **The 21st century physician faces challenges in the areas of managed healthcare, information technology, malpractice insurance and other patient issues.**
 - There are many opportunities for managers and healthcare representatives to partner with physicians.

of contracting with health plans.

To assist physicians in making better use of information technology, representatives should offer educational materials or training sessions on the use of computer systems and the Internet, and they should make certain that physicians are aware of technology systems and devices – including personal digital assistants (PDAs) – that allow the use of e-prescribing and other functions.

Increased malpractice litigation and rising insurance premiums are major concerns. Healthcare representatives can stress the safety features of products, educate physicians about e-prescribing, and arrange seminars or provide access to experts on the use of computer systems.

Today's informed patients expect much from their physicians. Pharmaceutical companies can provide valuable support to physicians by helping them find reliable medical information on the Internet, educational materials on complementary and alternative medicines, subscriptions to PDA references that review drugs and drug interactions, and product education materials.

In addition, healthcare representatives can help physicians navigate complex privacy issues by offering seminars to explain healthcare providers' responsibilities and the consequences of noncompliance, educational materials on HIPAA regulations, and seminars on electronic data security.

Finally, pharmaceutical companies can assist physicians treating aging patients by providing information on:

- How products help maintain a healthy lifestyle and prevent more debilitating conditions.
- Pharmaceutical company discount drug prescription programs available for Medicare enrollees.
- How to correctly complete Medicare forms so that claims are not rejected and how to resubmit claims if they are rejected.

The next series of articles will focus on pharmaceutical marketing.