Pharmacy Insights

November 2013

Efforts Throughout 2013 Showcase the Outcomes of Advocating for Your Profession

Matthews also met with Sen. Goeff Hansen (R-Hart), representing the 34th Senate district, to discuss the ability for the Michigan Board of Pharmacy to authorize pilot projects. Because of Matthews’ discussions with Sen. Hansen, Senate Bill 373 was introduced, which would authorize such pilot projects. Matthews testified before the Senate Health Policy Committee in support of the bill.

Grice of HomeTown Pharmacy had a phone conversation with Sen. Bruce Caswell (R-Hillsdale), representing the 16th Senate district, to discuss his audit legislation (Senate Bill 42) and how unfair audit practices are impacting pharmacies. He also addressed concerns with Sen. Caswell’s legislation, including additional provisions that need to be incorporated.

Kent Jenema of Peninsula Pharmacy hosted several meetings with Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), representing the 38th Senate district, along with the Senator’s chief of staff, to discuss concerns related to untimely maximum allowable cost (MAC) pricing updates by health plans and their PBMs. He shared with Casperson how this action limits the ability for a pharmacy to provide certain medications to patients as well as how it negatively impacts the pharmacy. Sen. Casperson then met with MPA to continue discussions and work on drafting fair MAC pricing legislation. The Senator and his chief of staff indicated that these considerations were all the result of continued advocacy efforts by Jenema.

Andrew Reeves of OptiMed Pharmacy and MPA met with Sen. Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton), representing the 20th Senate district, at his pharmacy and in Lansing to discuss unfair audit and PBM practices. The Senator was very interested in learning about these issues and indicated that she would be pursuing a four-part piece of legislation to address them. She ended the series of meetings by indicating that her goal would be to help fix Reeves’ pharmacy issues.

Jim Matthews and Jonathan Grice, both of HomeTown Pharmacy, also met with Rep. Jon Bumstead (R-Newaygo), representing the 100th Michigan House district, where they discussed concerns with the aggressive and unfair audit practices on the pharmacy by audit companies on behalf of health plans or pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs). Rep. Bumstead and Matthews also met in Lansing. Rep. Bumstead indicated that he would be introducing legislation addressing fair audit practices due to the relationship established between himself and the pharmacy.
Several Michigan pharmacists attended the NCPA Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. to address several key pharmacy-related issues impacting community pharmacy practice with the Michigan Congressional Delegation. Pictured, left to right: Wayne Seiler, owner of SRS Pharmacy Systems; Jeff Rowe, executive vice president of Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy; U.S. Rep. Kerry Bentivolio (R-11); and Hank Fuhs, chairman of Michigan Pharmacy PAC.

Annette Frosch, Michelle Buell, Alex Culy and Casey Sullivan with Nash Drugs hosted a meeting in their pharmacy with Sen. Caswell (R-Hillsdale) to discuss unfair MAC pricing issues and how some of the health plans are not allowing pharmacy providers to review and correct pricing changes. Following this meeting, Sen. Caswell reached out to the Michigan Association of Health Plans (MAHP) and MPA staff to discuss a corrective course of action to resolve these issues for Nash Drugs. MPA has continued conversations with MAHP, Medicaid and Sen. Caswell in an effort to resolve these issues. MAHP has indicated that if the issues cannot be resolved within current policy, they would assist MPA with legislative efforts to establish fair MAC pricing standards. As a result, Senate Bill 656 on MAC pricing was introduced by Sen. Caswell.

Ziad Ghamraoui of Saline Pharmacy hosted Rep. Gretchen Driskell (D-Saline), from the 52nd House district, to discuss PBM-related issues, MAC pricing and concerns related to controlled substance medications. In advance of the visit, the pharmacy prepared a short PowerPoint presentation addressing key pharmacy issues, including de-identified examples of significant negative MAC pricing reimbursements and examples of contracts that pharmacies are forced to sign. In addition, Ghamraoui shared news articles that covered the negative impact that mail-order has on community pharmacies, including a patient letter describing their experience with a mail-order pharmacy.

Western Michigan Pharmacy Association hosted their annual legislative advocacy event in Spring Lake. This event was attended by Rep. Marcia Hovey Wright (D-Muskegon), from the 92nd House district; Rep. Collene Lamonte (D-Montague) from the 91st House district; Rep. Amanda Price (R-Holland) from the 89th House district; Rep. Roger Victory (R-Hudsonville) from the 88th House district; Sen. Goeff Hansen (R-Hart), from the 34th Senate district; and Sen. Hansen’s chief of staff. The event was also attended by Marcia D’Alcorn, Mike Toscano, Ken Fagerman, Randy Dahlquist, Jerry Rodgers, Bill Overkamp, Sara Williams and Cheryl Gurley. Many issues were discussed by the pharmacy professionals in attendance and each legislator was given the chance to share information on some of their key legislative priorities. Following this meeting, Sen. Hansen introduced his pharmacy pilot project legislation (Senate Bill 373), and Rep. Lamonte requested additional meetings with MPA to discuss concerns with drug shortages and mandated mail-order prescription benefit programs and how the state can stop sending tax dollars out of Michigan.

Capital Area Pharmacists Association hosted a local advocacy event in Lansing, attended by Sen. Rick Jones (R-Grand Ledge) from the 24th Senate district. The breakfast event was held at a local restaurant. In attendance were Curtis Smith, Denise Pratt, Don Iacobelli, Greg and Rose Baran, Ron Melaragni, Courtney Kilbourn, Victoria McCausland and Karen Jonas. A variety of pharmacy-related issues were discussed, including some of Sen. Jones’ priorities. Following this event, Sen. Jones scheduled a meeting with MPA to discuss issues raised at the local event and items he might be able to help address.
Many Michigan pharmacy professionals attended the International Academy of Compounding Pharmacists Compounders on Capitol Hill event, June 1-4, 2013, in Arlington, Va. During the event, they met with U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, raised awareness about compounding pharmacy and addressed some concerns related to legislation that would impact compounding practice. Pictured, left to right: Mazen Baisa, Biomed Specialty Pharmacy; Nathan Worthing, Clark Pharmacy; Dave Miller, Keystone Pharmacy; Scott Popyk, Health Dimensions Pharmacy; U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow; Joe McCloskey, University Compounding Pharmacy; Cathy Saganski, Keystone Pharmacy; Thomas Strach, Biomed Specialty Pharmacy; Mindy Prasad, student pharmacist, University of Michigan; Mike Collins, Healthway Pharmacy; and Kenny Walkup, Specialty Medicine Compounding Pharmacy.

Several pharmacy school student organizations hosted legislative- and advocacy-related events in the state. The Ferris State University Student National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) chapter invited MPA to their campus to discuss the importance of legislative involvement. In addition, the Wayne State University Student Political Action Network group organized a letter writing campaign to Michigan Senators asking for their support of Senate Bill 92, the pharmacy technician licensure and certification legislation. These events highlight the importance of student involvement and utilization of different forums and methods to address advocacy or grassroots involvement.

Make a Year-End Contribution to Help Pharmacy PAC Continue to Support Your Practice in 2014

A Political Action Committee (PAC) is one of the most effective ways to influence the political process. A PAC helps a group of people consolidate and solidify their voice. Contributing to Michigan Pharmacy PAC in supporting the interests of the profession, health care interests and the patients you serve will increase the strength and reach of our messages. It will also increase the amount of legislation introduced that’s in favor of the practice and profession of pharmacy. Pharmacy PAC does more than contribute to campaigns. PAC hosts a wide variety of events, such as fundraisers and educational events, which spread the knowledge and influence of pharmacy. Join Pharmacy PAC today and together we can create a better tomorrow for our great profession and the millions of people we serve. Become a Governor’s Club Member by contributing $85 per month. Visit the MPA Web site for more information, or click on the ‘Subscribe’ button located online to pay in monthly installments of just $85 over the course of a year.
Genesee County Pharmacists Association hosted their local legislative event at a restaurant in Flint. The event was attended by Sen. Jim Ananich (D-Flint), from the 27th Senate District; Rep. Pam Faris (D-Clio), from the 48th House District; Rep. Joe Graves (R-Linden), from the 51st House District; Rep. Woodrow Stanley (D-Flint), from the 34th House District; and Tim Sneller, chief of staff for Rep. Charles Smiley (D-Burton) from the 50th House District. Also in attendance were Mike Crowe, Carrie and Rick Germain, Karen and Greg Jonas, Sue Pennell, Carol Raznik and Megan Buchinger. Two of the legislators in attendance at this event sit on their respective chamber’s Health Policy Committee, and they did vote favorably on two separate pieces of pharmacy-related legislation when their Committees held hearings and voted.

The Pharmacy Services Inc. (PSI) Board of Directors recently made a significant contribution of $25,000 to Pharmacy PAC. This contribution will assist in continued legislative outreach, education and events as well as support for pharmacy-friendly legislators. In addition, it will assist with backing efforts to introduce, move and pass pro-pharmacy legislation (i.e., fair MAC pricing for pharmacy, anti-mandatory mail-order, audit bill of rights). This contribution will greatly assist MPA with lobbying efforts and the entire pharmacy community thanks them for their support. Pictured, left to right: Mike Delpiere, Phillip Dast, Brian Swartz, Karen Jonas, Shane McNeill and Harvey Schmidt.

Many other pharmacy, legislative or advocacy events have occurred around the state that made an impact on elected officials and policymakers. While we’re not able to report on them all, it’s important to share efforts that are going on in Michigan and beyond to showcase the importance of pharmacy professionals having their voices heard. Legislators want to be educated on issues affecting their constituents and they do need to be made aware of things that impact your ability to practice as a pharmacy professional or things that influence your pharmacy.

MPA challenges each and every pharmacy professional to make the effort to get to know their legislator. Schedule a visit in their local office or in Lansing, invite them to your pharmacy, call them about your concerns or issues, write a letter or send an e-mail about an issue concerning your practice, attend a local event held by the legislator, or contribute to a candidate or to Pharmacy PAC. Make an effort to share your concerns. One voice can make a difference; and as you’ve seen here, many voices make an even greater impact.