

Senate Finance Committee Mental Health Discussion Draft Clinical Pharmacists Vital Contributions to Mental Health Care

The American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) appreciates the Senate Finance Committee's (SFC) ongoing efforts to tackle mental health care and substance abuse issues. As an organization representing highly qualified clinical pharmacists dedicated to the achievement of patient health and well-being through team-based care, ACCP has important insights on this issue. We urge the SFC to adopt our recommendations to improve the draft legislation released on November 10, 2022.

Clinical Pharmacists are Critical Members of the Mental Health Care Team

- Clinical pharmacists are experts in comprehensive medication management (CMM), a direct patient care service provided as part of formal health care teams to help optimize medication regimens for value and effectiveness. Because medication is so often a key component of mental health care treatment, participation of clinical pharmacists on inter-disciplinary healthcare teams is essential.
- According to the Alliance for Addiction Payment Reform, clinical pharmacists play a highly effective role in the treatment of substance use disorder (SUD),¹ one of the most significant aspects of mental health problems, and a key focus of the SFC draft.
- The Veterans Health Administration has long recognized the key role of clinical pharmacists on health care teams², especially for SUD, where their professional expertise is highly valued and proven effective.
- Integration of clinical pharmacist services into private sector acute care settings also benefits patients. A well-known academic health center in Chicago has effectively incorporated clinical

pharmacy services in its team-based approach to SUD treatment.³

- Clinical pharmacists' treatment of SUD has also proven effective in the primary care setting, as documented in several peer-reviewed studies published in important healthcare journals. (Citations available on request.)
- As members of healthcare teams treating mental health and SUD disorders, clinical pharmacists can also support a health workforce that is struggling with shortages. With a focus on medication optimization and CMM, clinical pharmacists allow other members of the health team to operate at the "top of their license."

Recommendations

The draft legislation should be updated to ensure the participation and payment of services for qualified clinical pharmacists on the healthcare teams treating mental health disorders, including SUD. As demonstrated by ample evidence in the published literature, as well as the practical experience of public and private health care systems, clinical pharmacists offer highly valuable care to individuals suffering from mental health disorders. The draft, and patient care, would be markedly improved by ensuring that clinical pharmacy expertise was fully incorporated into this care.

References

¹<https://incentivizerecovery.org/armh-apm-model/>

²VHA Handbook 1108.11(1), Clinical Pharmacy Services, July 1 2015 (amended June 29, 2017)

³J Addict Med. 2019 Nov/Dec; 13(6):460-463; and Am J Health Syst Pharm. 2021 Feb 8;78(4):345-353