

“How can I engage in advocacy for my profession and maintain a high level of engagement throughout my career?”

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Advocacy is an important responsibility for any health care professional and an essential leadership function. Laws and regulations inherently affect pharmacy practice and patient care, ranging from those governing patient access and coverage at the national level to the intricacies of individual practice acts at the state level.

To ensure that these laws and regulations meet the needs of patients, health professionals, and the delivery systems they are intended to serve, pharmacists must actively engage in the political process to positively influence the development of health care policy. Regardless of your position on individual issues or where you stand on the left/right or liberal/conservative spectrum, policy-makers rely on – and appreciate – the expertise of health professionals as part of the controversial health policy debate.

Since opening its Washington office in 2000, ACCP has made great strides in helping elected officials understand how clinical pharmacists improve patient outcomes and control health care costs by working as integrated members of multidisciplinary patient-centered teams to “get the medications right.”

Over the course of many Capitol Hill visits, ACCP has had the opportunity to help educate key congressional offices on:

- The definition of comprehensive medication management (CMM) and the process of care;
- CMM’s benefits to patients and the broader health care system;
- CMM’s acceptance within existing public and private programs;
- CMM’s potential for savings and quality improvement;
- How CMM differs from medication therapy management (MTM);
- The value clinical pharmacists add to team-based care; and
- Many other attributes of CMM that were not previously understood in Congress.

The College is confident that these efforts have enhanced the understanding of CMM and have helped put these services – as well as ACCP as its primary advocate – “on the map” on Capitol Hill. But politicians in Washington and in states and districts across the country must also hear from constituents who are actually providing these important services to patients. Quite simply, there are no better advocates for issues affecting pharmacists, their services, and their patients than pharmacists themselves. Pharmacy students are a particularly strong advocacy resource. Students represent the future of the profession and the next generation of pharmacists to practice within evolving, team-based health care delivery models.

Here are ways you can become more politically active on behalf of your profession and your patients.

Understand ACCP’s Medicare Initiative and Why Quality Patient Care Is More Than Just “Provider Status”

Many important resources related to ACCP’s Medicare Initiative are available online. Take the time to familiarize yourself with these documents to guide your communications with Congress and help deliver a consistent message around how CMM helps “get the medications right” and why Congress should enact legislation to achieve this. In particular, you are encouraged to review the following documents:

- [Medicare Initiative One-Page Summary](#). A concise summary of the Medicare Initiative providing talking points on why an essential objective for a modernized, cost-effective, and quality-focused Medicare program is to “get the medications right”;
- [Medicare Initiative Congressional Issue Brief](#). A two-page overview of the Medicare Initiative outlining the need for a CMM benefit within Medicare and providing details of ACCP’s legislative proposal;
- [Medicare Initiative Data Document](#). Aggregated data from 19 distinct medication management service practices that show the value of CMM services and provide evidence to show that including these services within Medicare would improve outcomes and lower costs; and
- [Medicare Initiative Update. Part B CMM Coverage vs. “Provider Status”: Examining the Difference](#). A thorough examination of why ACCP is seeking to establish a new Medicare Part B benefit for CMM services delivered by qualified clinical pharmacists, rather than “provider status” for pharmacists. The document explains why simply adding pharmacists to the list of Medicare providers will not guarantee that Medicare will pay pharmacists for their services. It highlights examples at the state level in California as well as initiatives at the federal level that illustrate the importance of securing a Medicare benefit that covers services, not providers.

For complete information on ACCP’s advocacy effort, visit the College’s Medicare Coverage Initiative page at www.accp.com/govt/medicare.aspx.

Practice Advancement Issue Briefs

ACCP’s advocacy efforts around health care transformation align with the College’s ongoing and ever-expanding clinical practice advancement initiatives. These include issue briefs, products, services, and educational resources essential for integrating clinical pharmacy services into contemporary team-based health care delivery.

ACCP’s Practice Advancement Issue Brief series are focused on payment methods in team-based practices. These and other resources align with health care transformation initiatives focused on operationalizing a shift from volume to value by putting policy into action.

- [Payment Methods in Outpatient Team-Based Clinical Pharmacy Practice, Part 2: MACRA for Pharmacists](#)
- [Collaborative Practice Agreements in Outpatient Team-Based Clinical Pharmacy Practice](#)
- [Payment Methods in Outpatient Team-Based Clinical Pharmacy Practice, Part 1](#)

Get Involved as a Grassroots Advocate

ACCP believes that its ongoing investment in its Washington office leaves the College well placed to move its advocacy agenda forward. But its success ultimately lies in the engagement of ACCP members to help their elected officials understand the importance of “get[ting] the medications right” as part of patient-centered, team-based models of care delivery.

With its more than 17,000 members, as well as their professional colleagues and patients, ACCP has the potential to exert considerable influence on Capitol Hill. But to realize this potential, the College needs the active participation of all of its members as grassroots advocates.

Send a Letter to Your Lawmakers

ACCP has prepared a letter to Congress describing its Medicare Initiative that you can review and edit. You can send this letter in just a few easy clicks, but for maximum impact, the College encourages you to personalize the letter by sharing some additional information about your clinical practice and the patients you care for. Simply [click here](#) to visit ACCP's Legislative Action Center and follow the instructions to send your message to your representative and senators.

Support Your Profession Through ACCP-PAC

There is a widely used analogy of advocacy as a three-legged stool – with the three legs composed of direct lobbying, grassroots action, and financial support for candidates. Political contributions are an essential component of ACCP's grassroots advocacy toolkit, helping to raise its profile on Capitol Hill and show its support for members of Congress who share its vision for clinical pharmacists in an evolving Medicare program.

A well-funded political action committee (PAC) demonstrates the commitment within the profession to a legislative and regulatory framework that supports a truly team-based, patient-centered, quality-oriented approach to health care delivery.

ACCP-PAC depends entirely on the support of ACCP members. Although numerous PACs represent various segments of the pharmacy profession, ACCP has the only PAC dedicated to advancing the practice of clinical pharmacy.

If each ACCP member contributed just \$25, ACCP-PAC would raise \$400,000. All ACCP members should consider donating at least \$25 to ACCP-PAC. [CLICK HERE](#) to support your PAC today!

Apply for the ACCP/ASHP/VCU Pharmacy Policy Fellow Program

The Pharmacy Policy Fellow Program is a collaborative effort of ACCP, the School of Pharmacy at the Medical College of Virginia/Virginia Commonwealth University, and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists.

The program provides a unique health care policy learning experience designed to demonstrate the value of pharmacy-government interaction and to facilitate practical contributions to the effective use of scientific and pharmaceutical knowledge in government policy development. Fellows spend a month with each of the professional organizations as members of their respective government and professional affairs staff. In September of the fellow year, they begin working in a legislative environment requiring health care input on the staff of an individual senator or representative or a relevant congressional committee.

The program is an enriching opportunity for the Fellow to develop legislative evaluation and policy development skills, improve research and writing skills, and integrate practical policy experience with theory. The Fellow is expected to undertake a wide array of responsibilities, including researching and preparing briefs on health care issues, assisting with policy decisions, drafting memoranda, and planning, organizing, and carrying out program and management objectives. Interested candidates should visit the Pharmacy Policy Fellow Program's [website](#) for more information.

Summary

Although the clinical pharmacist's work focuses primarily on the patient, health professionals also have a responsibility to be public policy advocates in order to ensure a legal and regulatory environment that enables the optimal delivery of care. Policy-makers rely on the expertise of health professionals to ensure the development of policies that support high-quality, team-based, patient-focused care. ACCP is fully committed to developing political advocacy within the profession and advancing its policy agenda. Clinical pharmacists should not question whether they should include advocacy as part of their professional career, but instead consider the extent to which they can commit to advocacy work. A wide range of opportunities exist within ACCP that allow members to become more politically engaged, and ACCP endeavors to help its members become leaders in the advocacy arena.

Contact Us! As always, ACCP staff in Washington, D.C., can assist with any of your efforts to develop advocacy skills that are central to your patient-care practice throughout your clinical pharmacy career:

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