



SB 493 (Hernandez): Putting Pharmacists on the Care Team

California faces a primary care provider shortage that will only worsen over the next few years. Pharmacists are highly-educated and under-utilized members of the care team. SB 493 seeks to improve patient access to healthcare by empowering pharmacists to provide basic care services in collaboration with physicians, Medical Homes and other systems of care in which patients receive treatment. **All of the authorities addressed in this bill are currently within the pharmacist scope of practice, but they are generally tied to specific care settings (Sections 4052.1 and 4052.2). This bill expands the types of settings that pharmacists can practice these services in.**

Problem – The Primary Care Shortage:

- Only 16 out of 58 California counties have enough PCPs.
- 7 million Californians will obtain health insurance for the first time in 2014 under the ACA and will begin seeking care.

Solutions:

- Ensuring Californians have adequate access to care will require a comprehensive, multifaceted solution; there is no magic bullet.
- Part of the long-term solution needs to be increasing the number of PCPs that practice in underserved areas through increased medical schools and financial assistance.
- Another part of the solution needs to focus on utilizing highly trained providers, such as pharmacists, in health care teams that maximize their education and training to help meet patient demand today.
- The healthcare system needs to expand patient-centered, team-based care. Health experts agree that this will improve quality, accessibility and cost efficiency in healthcare.
- Whether through a medical home or other collaborative practice model, team-based care uses health professionals to provide a range of care based on their expertise.
 - The President-elect of the American Medical Association states “Team care, in which each member is doing what they have been trained to do best, is really what’s going to produce greater efficiency and greater quality of care.”

The Bill:

- SB 493 is aimed at positioning pharmacists as health care providers and including them as members of the care team:
 - Pharmacists are the foremost experts in medications, and more than 80 percent of health conditions are treated with prescription medications.
 - Some diseases are not cured by simply giving patients medications. Many chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes require ongoing maintenance to ensure the maximum efficacy of the medications. Additionally, pharmacists must ensure that other medications do not interact or cause unintended negative effects.
- All of the authorities addressed in this bill are currently within the pharmacist scope of practice, but they are generally tied to specific care settings. This bill expands the types of settings that pharmacists can practice these services in.

Pharmacists:

- Pharmacists are trained and qualified:
 - Pharmacy education consists of a post graduate doctoral program, which now extensively covers direct patient care, disease prevention and management, and requires clinical rotations in a variety of health care settings. Many graduates also complete a post-doctoral residency or other certificate programs in specialty practices.
- Pharmacists are accessible:
 - Pharmacists practice in community pharmacies, hospitals, clinics, physician offices and other settings.
 - Over 90% of people live within five miles of a pharmacy, and most pharmacies are open beyond normal business hours.
 - Pharmacies are one of few health care settings where patients do not need an appointment to access care.
- Pharmacist-provided care is safe and extensive documentation demonstrates that pharmacists improve outcomes:
 - The services outlined in SB 493 are already performed by pharmacists in California in health system settings as well as in other states.
 - For over 50 years, pharmacists have been engaged as primary care providers in team-based federal health care models such as the Indian Health Service, the Veterans Administration and Department of Defense.
 - Pharmacists have also played an increased role in numerous pilot projects and smaller integrated systems, all of which have found that pharmacist-provided care is safe and effective and improves patient outcomes.

Details:

- Pharmacists seek to be included as part of the care team, but they are not currently operating consistent with their training. SB 493 aligns pharmacists' scope of practice with their level of training.
- The authorities in SB 493 will enable pharmacists to make a more significant contribution to the care team and better care for patients.
- For example, SB 493 will:
 - Declare pharmacists as healthcare providers, ensuring that health plans and other systems of care can include pharmacists as member of the health care team.
 - Allow pharmacists to initiate prescriptions for travel medicines, hormonal contraception, and smoking cessation drugs.
 - Streamline the process for obtaining authority to provide immunizations.
 - Make it easier for physicians to refer patients to the pharmacist member of the care team for ongoing management and referral back to the physician when necessary by authorizing pharmacists working in collaboration with physicians, health facilities, and other systems of care to:
 - Perform patient assessments.
 - Order and interpret laboratory tests to monitor patient progress.
 - Adjust a patient's prescription when necessary and medically appropriate.
 - Discontinue medications that are duplicative, unnecessary, or life-threatening to a patient.