Over-the-Counter Pharmacy Benefit Retained Through Bargaining

In mid-June 2017, Newberg employees were informed that their over-the-counter (OTC) pharmacy benefit at Newberg would be ending July 1. This was a long-standing benefit that preceded unionization at Newberg. Newberg nurses and other caregivers were able to buy OTC medication and supplements such as Boost at a deep discount at the Newberg pharmacy. We filed an information request, and demanded to bargain as this benefit is something that nurses relied on and considered part of their overall benefit package.

We met on July 26 and bargained. It was explained that Newberg nurses would be able to go to St. Vincent’s and other Providence hospitals to purchase OTC products. That was not a satisfactory answer for our union leadership. We later learned that there is a OTC and prescription delivery service that can be made available for employees. We requested that this service be extended to Newberg nurses, along with the discount.

The end result was this agreement:

- PHS Retail pharmacies offer caregivers OTC medications, supplements (including Boost) for cost plus 20%
- PHS Retail pharmacies will courier prescriptions to PNMC employees' home for a $3/delivery charge
- They can also deliver OTCs (including Boost or other supplements) with a prescription for a $3/delivery charge; or without a prescription with a $10 minimum order for the same delivery charge.
- Limitation on delivery. It is a generous delivery area, but there are distance limits to the delivery service and very rural areas are likely out of bounds. The cost can be quite a bit more for extended service areas.
- Caregiver can order by calling the nearest Providence retail pharmacy location; or can pick up items at any Providence retail location.

Please extend a warm thank you to your ONA officers Valerie Whitmore (Chair and ICU representative) and Lisa Carey (Secretary and Surgical Services representative) for their assistance in bargaining this agreement.
New Staffing Plans Are in Effect

In August, the Newberg staffing committee agreed to a new Med/Surg staffing plan that is based on both ratios and acuity. This was after several efforts over the last few years to get a reasonable plan that followed the staffing law.

This is the second department-wide staffing plan, after Family Birth, to be agreed to this year by the staffing committee, which consists of an equal number of bedside nurses and management. The committee members vote on a plan that is developed between nurse leaders and managers for their respective departments. The plan is required to take in all elements of the staffing law, which includes safe ratios, acuity, admissions discharges, and transfers (ADT), meals and rest periods, and several other items that protect patients and nurses. You can see the full staffing law here: www.healthoregon.org/nursestaffing

On Sept. 21, the staffing committee reviewed the Surgical Services department plan. Some adjustments were suggested and the committee agreed to the new plan, as long as those adjustments are made.

On October 19, the ED staffing plan is scheduled to be reviewed. On November 16, the ICU staffing plan is scheduled to be reviewed. If you would like to attend as an observer, please reach out to Savannah Jensen at Savannah.Powell@providence.org and she can invite you.

Please extend a warm thank you to your ONA staffing committee: Savannah Jensen (Med/Surg and co-chair), Brandi Osborne (Family Birth), Amy Brenner (Surgical Services), Jason Lehman (Emergency) and Denise O’Connell (ICU) for their tireless efforts in making sure that patients are protected and that nurses can provide safe patient care. We also want to thank the staffing committee management representatives for working with us on these plans.

Important ONA Nurse Resources

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