

As a resident in your district I would like to share information with you that can help in your efforts to form good public policy.

The Florida legislature will be reviewing a number of issues related to health care. As a citizen residing in your district I feel that it is important that you have access to a source of information on issues that may help you to understand the important role that pharmacists play in health care delivery.

In many cases you may not be familiar with the extensive academic programs and credentialing requirements that pharmacists must satisfy to serve Florida's citizens. College academic programs accredited in this state are no less than 6 years with significant classroom, laboratory and clinical training in life sciences. Florida's colleges of pharmacy are some of the best in the national producing the top pharmacy science scholars in America. Many practicing pharmacists in our state's community, institutional and long term care pharmacy settings extend their training through residencies, fellowships and other advanced training. In addition Florida's pharmacist continuing education requirements are one of the most comprehensive in the nation.

Evidence shows through various studies that pharmacists help to lower health care costs as well as improve the proper utilization of prescription drugs and devices. Some specific examples include the following:

1. Pharmacists providing asthma management services and pharmacy care to two employer groups decreased cost, improved care and improved work absence rates.
2. Pharmacists providing pharmacy care to patients with high cholesterol in their community improved patient compliance with medication from a national average of 40% to 90%.
3. Pharmacists providing pharmaceutical care services to patients in long-term care facilities increased the number of patients receiving optimal care by 45% resulting in an estimated \$3.7 billion in cost avoidance.
4. As hospitals increased the number of pharmacists providing pharmacy care, medication errors have declined by over 65%.
5. Recent changes in Florida laws allow pharmacists to immunize patients for influenza, pneumonia and shingles. Well over millions of doses have been administered to patients who probably would not have received a flu shot otherwise.

There is a pharmacy within 5 miles of every household in America. Nearly every citizen of this state will visit a pharmacy each month. Florida licensed pharmacists are available for health care consultations evenings, nights, weekends and holidays. Most do not even require an appointment. We are this state's most accessible health care professional working hard to solve the needs of this state.

Our services in community pharmacies go far beyond the processing of prescriptions. We are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the drug product selected is appropriate for each patient. Some medications that are given together may cause undesirable effects. When we dispense medications to patients we search for problems related to drugs interacting with each other, diseases and drugs that should not be combined or problems related to taking drugs with certain foods.

I hope that if you need information on pharmacy related services that you will not hesitate to contact me or the Florida Pharmacy Association at (850) 222-2400 for answers to any of your questions. We are here to serve and support quality health in the State of Florida.

I know that you are quite busy with all the issues that the legislature must try to resolve. As a member of the health care profession the needs of our patients are our needs. Thank you for allowing me to share this with you.