

Not Your Mother's Big Pharma

By Paul DeMiglio | October 10, 2013

In a September 29 article in *Adweek*, Joan Voight demonstrates how the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is expected to create new opportunities for pharmaceutical stakeholders to play a more active, personalized role in managing patient care through interactive web-based tools. Three aspects of the ACA will change the way treatment decisions are made and reinvent how patients and Big Pharma interact.



Fill the Primary Care Gap

Although providers will be overwhelmed by an expected uptick in newly insured patients, pharmaceutical companies can help reduce the strain while strengthening relationships with consumers in the process. MerckEngage — an online educational and marketing program that has attracted 8.2 million visits since its launch in 2010 — is one example of just how this can play out. Among some of the resources the website gives members access to include:

- Free personal health tracking
- Daily planners
- Food and exercise tips
- E-mail messages
- Content updates

Doctors who sign up will receive alerts to track their patients' activity, and starting this year the program also features mobile versions for patients and providers alike.

Provide Solutions to Adherence Challenges

A key goal of the ACA — to prevent sick patients from developing more serious conditions and needing more care — emphasizes the importance of increasing medication adherence. This need presents a valuable opportunity for pharma to

personalize treatment and communicate in ways that resonate effectively with target audiences.

AstraZeneca is collaborating with Exco InTouch to help patients and doctors track and manage chronic conditions through mobile and web-based tools:

“The first app addresses chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Patients enrolled in the program collect, transmit and review their own clinical data, while their doctors use real-time information to personalize each patient’s care, adjust meds and possibly prevent hospitalization. The patients’ identifiable data is only seen by patients themselves and their healthcare providers, says AstraZeneca,” the report notes.

Develop Innovative Bundles

Implementation of ACA will also change the way prescriptions are made, with insurance companies and accountable care organizations (ACOs) choosing what to prescribe instead of individual doctors. This can serve as an opportunity for pharma to build support among ACOs by creating and branding a package of services for patients and providers that spans behavior modification, education, tracking and dispensing of drugs.

Eli Lilly’s online diabetes program that helps patients and families manage the disease, Lilly Diabetes, was critical to paving the way for this marketing approach, according to the article:

“In Lilly’s case the tools include a meal planner, a self-care diary, a carbohydrate tabulator and even an emergency guide in case of hurricanes or earthquakes.”

Now we want to hear from you. Do you agree with the article? What are the long-term implications of pharmaceutical companies having access to more data about consumers in this new era of digital outreach? What might be the potential advantages and disadvantages?

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