



House Committee on vision 2020
Testimony submitted by Mike Larkin
Kansas Pharmacists Association, Topeka Kansas

January 14, 2015

Chairman Sloan and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mike Larkin, and I am the Executive Director of the Kansas Pharmacists Association. The Kansas Pharmacists Association is the statewide professional association in Kansas that represents Kansas pharmacists from all practice settings. Thank you for allowing me to present testimony today on pharmacy in Kansas.

Pharmacy in Kansas today is confronted by the numerous uncertainties in the future of healthcare policy in the United States. Everything from Medicaid expansion, drug price increases and shifting responsibilities create an atmosphere of unknowns for pharmacists in virtually all practice settings.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss some of today's objectives the committee has regarding pharmacy in Kansas. I hope my responses assist you in your important work on behalf of the people of Kansas.

Medicaid Expansion:

One of the objectives is to understand what problems Kansas experiences by not expanding Medicaid coverage. Kansans will continue to pay out federal taxes that will help pay for Medicaid recipients in other States. From a pharmacy perspective, both brand and generic medications have continued to see price increases far beyond the consumer price index inflation rate. Without Medicaid coverage, many Kansans will not be able to access medications that continue to dramatically increase in cost.

Pharmacy has heard anecdotally that the federal 340b drug discount program is likely to have significant changes in 2016. These changes will have funding impacts on many hospitals in Kansas. Current 340b discounts have enabled hospitals to secure millions of dollars in funding to expand programs and treat the indigent. If this program is eliminated or changed without Medicaid expansion to help cover the costs of treatment, these hospitals may have to refuse care or reduce services.

Kansans fear the closing of hospitals that provide a disproportionate amount of care to vulnerable populations in the State. Many of these hospitals are funded through federal grant money that may cease if the federal government considers all Kansans to have coverage based on federal Medicaid guidelines.

Innovation in Pharmacy:

As Kansas faces the challenges of healthcare in the 21st century, the answer is to innovate. Preventive health care at an affordable price will reduce the high cost of chronic disease. Affordable medications and adherence to them is a key to keeping Kansans healthy. Access to healthcare is crucial to all Kansans. The health care system is complex and reducing the complexities of payment systems and access should reduce costs to Kansans.

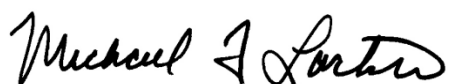
KPhA applauds use of the Internet to more effectively provide health care services to Kansans. Continuing to focus on the development of the Kansas Health Information Exchange (KHIE) will certainly be a step in the right direction. The inclusion of pharmacy prescription data in the KHIE will help provide all applicable health information in the exchange for providers which in turn will allow those providers to know a patient's complete medical history.

Programs specific to pharmacy such as shared order entry as allowed under K.A.R. 68-7-20 will continue to be very helpful to pharmacists in the filling and dispensing of prescriptions. The Kansas Board of Pharmacy's policy for conducting pilot programs will allow pharmacists to harness their creativity to come up with new and innovative ways of using the Internet in pharmacy operations.

A number of pharmacists in Kansas have begun providing wellness coaching for some of their patients. A wellness coach helps motivate the patient and find the tools to reach physical and emotional health goals through better choices that fit the patient's lifestyle. Wellness coaching takes time and frequent visits to the pharmacy but if done appropriately could significantly reduce healthcare costs.

Proven programs such as Medication Therapy Management (MTM) have great potential to reduce inappropriate medication costs. KPhA will start conducting MTM training sessions around the state next month. Happily, MTM services are currently a provision of the current KanCare/managed-care organization contracts.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. Please feel free to contact me at 785-228-2327 any time if you have questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael J. Lortie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Larkin
Executive Director
Kansas Pharmacists Association