



Pharmacy

Testimony for Senate Bill 200
Creation of Statewide Pharmacy Protocols
House Committee on Health and Human Services
By Amanda Applegate, Pharmacy Clinical Services Coordinator
Balls Food Stores, Kansas City Kansas
March 14, 2022

Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the Committee:

I am Amanda Applegate, pharmacist and Clinical Services Coordinator for Balls Food Stores in Kansas City, Kansas. We are a 99 year old family-owned chain of supermarkets which operates 13 pharmacies in Kansas. I have previously served as the president of the Kansas Pharmacists Association (KPhA). KPhA is the statewide professional association that represents pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and student pharmacists from all practice settings across the state of Kansas. Thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of my pharmacies in support of Senate Bill 200.

This bill serves to allow pharmacists to meet the healthcare needs of their patients and communities in limited situations when time to treatment is important. Medication for influenza is most effective when started within 48 hours of the first symptom; research has demonstrated that it's safe for individuals to return to work or school within 24 hours of treatment for strep throat. Prompt treatment of urinary tract infections can help prevent the spread of those infections within the body and provide relief of painful symptoms.

The Kansans who would benefit most from these protocols are those without easy access to primary or urgent care providers. In my experience working in three Kansas counties, there are stark differences between access to health care in a county where part or all of the county is federally designated as a primary health care professional shortage area and access where primary care is sufficient. In many cases, my patients in Leavenworth and Wyandotte Counties saw time to travel for care as a significant barrier for them to overcome. Hospitals and other care sites closing in Leavenworth while I worked there further exacerbated those concerns. For something such as a sore throat or influenza-like symptoms, many then worked while ill (exposing those around them) or would stay at home until symptoms passed (missing many days of work). With access to a pharmacy in 103 of 105 Kansas counties, often with extended daily and weekend hours, pharmacists testing and promptly initiating protocol-guided therapy could help avoid additional workplace illnesses and worsening of individual conditions leading to hospitalization.

In the nationally accredited Doctor of Pharmacy curriculum, all student pharmacists are trained in the utilization and interpretation of laboratory devices used in a pharmacy, as well as in the assessment of vital signs such as blood pressure, pulse, and oxygen status. Student pharmacists are also trained in signs, symptoms, and lab values that necessitate medical referral. Many of our Balls Foods pharmacists utilize this education on a regular basis, as patients present to our counters with questions about symptoms or a measurement they had on a home blood pressure or glucose device. Pharmacists have access to continuing education offered by national pharmacy organizations that provide training in techniques and devices not yet taught in schools of pharmacy, such as nasopharyngeal swabs which have been critical during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over 25 states, including Kansas, currently have one or more statewide protocols for pharmacists used primarily to address public health needs such as tobacco cessation, immunizations, and infectious diseases. Many states such as Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, and Florida have passed measures that specifically provide for pharmacist testing and treatment of influenza and strep throat. Research and utilization of pharmacists providing assessment and treatment for influenza has been ongoing for more than 15 years.¹ Considering continuing shortages of primary care providers in 102 of 105 Kansas counties², as well as rising health care costs, Kansas pharmacists can help bridge a gap with quality care performed in a time- and cost-effective manner for both patients and health plans.

This bill allows for the physicians and pharmacists appointed to the Collaborative Drug Therapy Management Committee to put forth narrowly defined statewide protocols for pharmacists to address these public health needs. All protocols crafted will provide for reporting of treatments dispensed back to known primary care providers and will have specific inclusion and exclusion criteria designed to protect those who would be beyond the care of a pharmacist.

Thank you for your time and consideration today. I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

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¹ Klepser ME, Adams AJ. Pharmacy-based management of influenza: lessons learned from research. *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice* (2018).

² Health Professional Shortage Areas: Primary Care, by County, 2021 – Kansas, accessed from data.HRSA.gov January 2021.