

Abstract

Statement of Problem

Pharmacists are now able to bill Medicare for certain patient management services. Alaska's pharmacists rarely utilize this new Medication Therapy Management (MTM) program. If more patients with chronic disease were managed and counseled, it is possible improvements in health outcomes would follow.

Methods

A survey of Alaska's pharmacists (n = 53) determined attitudes and understanding about MTM. Key informant interviews (n = 15) provided additional insight. Two tools were then developed to assist pharmacists to help answer questions and increase publicity about MTM.

Results

To date, face-to-face MTM has been provided to approximately 100 Alaskans (about one-half of those eligible) in 2006. Reasons for low utilization include the amount of time required by pharmacists to provide MTM; poor reimbursement rates; and a lack of willingness from pharmacy owners to dedicate staff time to MTM.

Conclusions and Implications for Public Health Practice

Eligible patients could benefit from MTM; however it appears to be underutilized due to time constraints of the pharmacists; heavy up-front administrative requirements; and low reimbursement rates. Expanded state efforts to educate and support pharmacists to more effectively implement MTM are warranted. As is, it is most likely a select few pharmacies will continue to specialize in MTM across Alaska due to their positive early experiences with the program.