

## Managed Care Outpatient Pharmacy

### Holland Code: ECS

#### Background

Pharmacists employed by managed care organizations are responsible for a broad and diversified range of clinical, quality-oriented, drug management services. Pharmacists in managed care strive to provide the highest quality drug therapy management for the members in a plan, while considering the pharmacoeconomic implications for the entire group of patients. Most pharmacists in managed care work for health plans and pharmacy benefit management (PBM) companies. They perform a wide array of critical tasks that allow individual patients to get the appropriate drug at the right time in a convenient, cost effective manner. Pharmacists in managed care perform a variety of functions, including drug distribution and dispensing, patient safety monitoring, clinical program development, business operations, analysis of therapeutic outcomes, and cost management.

Managed care pharmacists have diverse responsibilities in the health care system. According to respondents, 24% of their time is spent on medication dispensing (including associated patient counseling), 23% is spent on business/organization/department management, and 11% is spent on personnel management. Notably, the managed care environment is rather diverse and a pharmacist might work with a local group of patients or with patients from across the country.

#### Characteristics

Thirty-two managed care pharmacists responded to the 2012 *APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program* survey. Eighty-eight percent held a bachelor of pharmacy degree, 6% had a post BS PharmD, and 12% had an entry level PharmD degree. Sixty-four percent indicated an advanced degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, or other). Twenty-nine percent had been through a residency program and 40% had been through certificate training. Respondents' average age was 50 years old. Just over half (53%) of respondents were female. Income data show that 19% earn less than 100,000, while the rest earn \$100,000 or more per year. Thirteen percent earn more than \$150,000. The average time worked per week was 43.4 hours.

Respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their work, with 55% indicating "extremely satisfied" and 36% indicating "somewhat satisfied." Similarly, most respondents indicated that they felt the work was quite challenging, with 52% indicating "extremely challenging" and 42% indicating "somewhat challenging."

## **Insider's Perspective**

### **What aspects of the job are most appealing?**

Responses to this question were highly variable, showing that there are many favorable aspects to working in a managed care outpatient setting. One pharmacist said that they enjoyed “working in a managed care setting [where] I have the opportunity to interact with clinicians. It is a more clinical feel than retail.” Several did comment on the advantage of working closely to the physicians in the managed care organization. One pharmacist said that they enjoyed having “freedom to apply change and efficiency.” One respondent, in a leadership position within the organization, said, “As an Executive, I am thrilled to work in an integrated, non-profit, delivery system with our own physicians.”

### **What aspects of the job are least appealing?**

Several respondents commented that the salary in this setting is lower than in others; one respondent said: “Salary is 10 to 20% less competitive than market although benefits long term is superior.” Other respondents mentioned the managerial burden and budgeting process as unappealing aspects of the work.

### **What advice should students and practitioners consider when selecting the option of managed care pharmacy?**

Many respondents recommended considering further education and training if considering a job in this role. One said that it would be helpful to become a Certified Diabetic Educator, another recommended two years of residency and BPS Certification, and still another said to consider getting work experience in another setting before moving into the managed care outpatient pharmacy setting. One respondent said to consider that the “pay is lower than traditional retail, but quality of life is better.”

Adapted from the American Pharmacists Association