

Continuing trends, unexpected changes: Optimizing specialty pharmacy in a new environment

KEY CONCEPTS

- Any established health system specialty pharmacy can benefit from looking at ways to optimize operations.
- Against a background of long-term, continuing growth in health system specialty pharmacy, COVID-19 has caused major disruption.
- Many health systems select a trusted partner to help strategize, plan and execute their next steps in specialty pharmacy.
- Excelera's range of data-driven solutions can transform the way complex pharmacy patient care is delivered within the health system.

INTRODUCTION

Establishing in-house specialty pharmacy has allowed many integrated health systems to serve their complex patients more effectively while retaining some of the revenue otherwise lost to outside pharmacies. Trends since the early 2000s have favored the growth of health system specialty pharmacy.

As a health system specialty pharmacy moves beyond the startup phase into maturity, it is imperative to regularly take a step back, assess strengths and weaknesses, and create a plan for optimizing operations moving forward. However, planning can seem impossible when a factor like the COVID-19 pandemic radically disrupts health care in all its dimensions.

Certain trends are emerging as a result of new circumstances, and some of these may result in opportunities for specialty pharmacy. Optimizing now will build the foundation for flourishing despite whatever else may come in the post-pandemic world.

EXCELERA PROGRAMS & BENEFITS

Specialty Pharmacy Startup & Optimization

Benefit from our years of experience building out and optimizing health system-based specialty pharmacies nationwide. We offer the best practices and benchmark data health systems need to quickly establish an owned specialty pharmacy.

BABY STEPS, BEST PRACTICES AND BUSTING BARRIERS

Optimizing specialty pharmacy can mean anything from relatively simple steps such as tweaking workflows and adding staff to major investments in new solutions, such as home infusion capabilities or more transparent pharmacy benefit management (PBM) capabilities. Many health systems select a trusted partner to help strategize, plan and execute their next steps in specialty pharmacy. One such partner, founded by health system leaders, is Excelera, which seeks to transform the way health care is delivered to complex pharmacy patients. Members of the Excelera nationwide network

SNAPSHOT

- Specialty pharmacy represents about 46% of total pharmacy spend and continues to grow at a faster pace than traditional pharmacy.ⁱ
- In 2019, 60% of 508 drugs awaiting U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval by 2021 were specialty drugs,ⁱⁱ and the FDA approval process does not appear to have been slowed by COVID-19.
- In 2019, 32% of accredited specialty pharmacy locations were owned by healthcare providers, including hospitals and health systems, up from 11% in 2015.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Many payers are dissatisfied with the data they receive from their specialty pharmacy providers.^{iv}

of health systems actively engage with each other, to share best practices, and with the company's Complex Patient Data Platform, a valued source for combined medical and pharmacy insights, to optimize every facet of the specialty pharmacy opportunity.

BEST PRACTICES

Is specialty revenue stagnating? Are customers waiting too long when they call customer service? Do prior authorization requirements stymie script capture? Is adherence among patients with certain disease states stubbornly low? Excelera engages with health system specialty pharmacies to address these and other issues. For Omaha-based CHI Health, for example, Excelera worked with the specialty pharmacy to develop staffing models to help shore up accreditation-critical call center metrics. Excelera was mindful of financial constraints that demanded CHI Health take an incremental approach to hiring. After initial hires of a manager and a dedicated call center pharmacy technician, additional pharmacy technicians were hired over the course of several years as Medication Access Coordinators integrated into specialty clinics, easing prior authorization burdens on providers and patients and increasing the number of prescriptions filled internally.

EXCELERA PROGRAMS & BENEFITS

Integrated Data Platform

Our comprehensive complex patient data platform provides rich insights and access to centralized data and reporting that satisfies drug manufacturer, payer, accreditation and other industry requirements.

DELVING INTO DATA

Excelera's Complex Patient Data Platform is a valuable tool for optimizing specialty pharmacy. For members, Excelera provides regular reports and benchmarking data to optimize both specialty pharmacy operations and the patient journey.

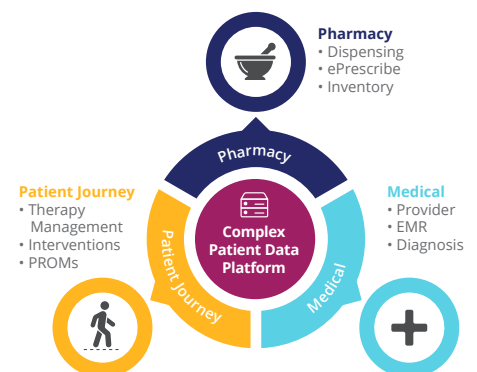
The capabilities and benefits of the platform are numerous. Data is not typically a health system's core competency, but Excelera's rigorous upfront onboarding for the Complex Patient Data Platform ensures that each health system gets a customized process, supported by ongoing engagement and reporting.

Consider one dimension of complex patient care: adherence. Excelera calculates and assesses adherence data for a variety of complex and chronic conditions. By using aggregated data from many health systems to report proportion of days covered (PDC) on a scheduled cadence, the platform allows specialty pharmacists to regularly track adherence and make patient outreach and therapy management decisions on a timely basis. With more than a quarter of prescriptions for branded specialty drugs abandoned during the deductible phase—a statistic from prior to COVID-19 job and insurance losses—adherence metrics are especially critical at this time.

The scale of the platform's aggregated data is also attractive to drug manufacturers and to payers, providing insights into population health for a larger group of patients. In a given disease state, for example, the aggregated data is expansive enough to provide

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real-world evidence and demonstrate meaningful trends, even for rare conditions.

GAINING ACCESS

The two largest barriers to specialty pharmacy growth are still access to payer contracts and access to drugs. Excelera leverages national reach, the Complex Patient Data Platform and specialized expertise to help health system specialty pharmacies optimize in both these areas.



EXCELERA PROGRAMS & BENEFITS

Payer Access Program

Working with specialty pharmacy and health systems-managed care teams to open doors to restricted payer networks enables continuity of care for complex pharmacy patients.

Limited Distribution Drug (LDD) Program

Enables health systems to participate in Excelera Network agreements with drug manufacturer partners to gain access to limited distribution drugs (LDDs).

The Excelera Payer Access Program provides expert education and analysis, identifies the ideal payer mix, cultivates contractual agreements, and provides data reporting to, and on behalf of, the health system. The program can locate payer proposal opportunities that the health system might not be aware of, and it allows health systems to tap into specialized contracting expertise and capabilities that most do not have internally. The Complex Patient Data Platform positions health system specialty pharmacies as sources for accurate, standardized specialty pharmacy data that is timely and useful for payers, closing gaps in their knowledge of the patient journey. The Payer Access Program is available to both member and non-member health systems to help reduce no/go rates, increase fill rates and minimize fragmentation of care.

The Limited Distribution Drug (LDD) Program also leverages the Complex Patient Data Platform. It enables health system specialty pharmacies to participate in network agreements with drug manufacturer partners to gain access to LDDs and provide the data that manufacturers require. Excelera can also help health system specialty pharmacies stay aware of open-access drugs, especially in the fluid environment surrounding COVID-19. More oncology drugs, for example, have become available through open access. The pendulum will likely swing back again to more drugs having more limited access. In either case, Excelera's expertise can help to optimize drug access.

Among the organizations that have decided to partner with Excelera during these turbulent times is Chartwell Pennsylvania, LP, which provides at-home infusion therapies, specialty pharmacy services and enteral nutrition. Owned by four health systems and managed by University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Chartwell is working with Excelera to further optimize specialty pharmacy and home infusion services, improve data and reporting, and provide patients with increased access to LDDs.

BUILDING A SUITE OF SOLUTIONS

Payers have been encouraging or insisting on lower-cost sites of care for some time. COVID-19 has shifted the lens slightly to account for added safety from infection for both

complex patients and health care staff. Home infusion (HI), already growing, stands to benefit from this shift, and health systems that already have specialty pharmacies may find that expanding into HI aligns with clinical, financial and safety strategies.

With support from Excelera's Home Infusion Program, Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) launched a home infusion pharmacy in 2017 to complement ambulatory infusion capabilities. Excelera consulted with OHSU beginning about 14 months prior to planned launch, working on the project plan, project management, ancillary services contracting, information systems coordination, and models for staffing, workflow, and finance, as well as providing other services and best practices from its comprehensive home infusion blueprint and playbook.



EXCELERA PROGRAMS & BENEFITS

Home Infusion Program

Provides health systems with a blueprint enabling them to establish and operate a home infusion pharmacy — as well as generate additional revenue from ancillary infusion services.

Health System-Centric PBM Solution

Aligns with the best interests of health systems, enabling them to secure control of formulary, clinical protocols and pharmacy networks to drive the lowest net cost for clinically appropriate therapy.

Another area of expansion is pharmacy benefit management. More health systems are discovering that having a PBM can align pharmacy patient care strategies with other system strategies and improve consistency and data continuity. For example, the pharmacy benefit formulary can be matched with the inpatient formulary, eliminating unnecessary administrative burden and patient disruption. Pharmacy benefits are thus informed by local population health, rather than by a big PBM's manufacturer rebate arrangements.

Excelera offers a Pharmacy Benefit Management Solution that is unique in its combination of clinical integration and alignment, cost savings, transparency and independent, unbiased expertise. Excelera provides all the components necessary to create an integrated PBM that aligns with a health system's clinical, financial and quality goals and delivers a desirable benefits solution to local employers and plan sponsors.

CONCLUSION

Excelera's range of data-driven solutions has been developed to transform the way complex pharmacy patient care is delivered within the health system. Optimizing in-house specialty pharmacy during challenging times builds a foundation for continued success in the future.

Sources:

- i IQVIA, National Sales Perspectives, April 2019, cited in "The US Specialty Pharmaceutical Market: Trends, Issues, and Outlook" at Asembia Specialty Pharmacy Summit, 2019.
- ii The Health Management Academy, "Trends in Specialty Pharmacy: 2019 Health System Executive Brief." (2019, June), cited in CSI Group: 2019 State of Specialty Pharmacy Report.
- iii Drug Channels Institute. Hospitals Continue Their Startling Expansion into Specialty Pharmacy. August 18, 2020. Accessed at <https://www.drugchannels.net/2020/08/hospitals-continue-their-startling.html> on September 23, 2020.
- iv CSI Group: 2019 State of Specialty Pharmacy Report. Only 25% of payers surveyed were satisfied with data from specialty pharmacy providers.
- v Amundsen Consulting (a division of QuintilesIMS) analysis for PhRMA; IMS FIA; Rx Benefit Design, 2015, cited in "The US Specialty Pharmaceutical Market: Trends, Issues, and Outlook" at Asembia Specialty Pharmacy Summit, 2019.