Case Study: Partners Health Plan & RxManager

Partners Health Plan
New York City, NY

Challenge

Officially called the PHP Care Complete FIDA-IDD Plan, Partners Health Plan (PHP) is a mission-driven non-profit managed care plan for Medicare and Medicaid dual-eligible adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). PHP can trace its lineage directly from the advocacy efforts of parents of children with IDD, as channeled through AHRC or ARC agencies in New York City and surrounding counties. CMS approved PHP to operate a Fully Integrated Duals Advantage (FIDA) Plan in 2016.

PHP is responsible for the full range of health, behavioral health, dental, habilitation, and social needs of its members, and blends Medicaid funding to provide specialized services. In short, PHP provides a complex bundle of services to people with a complex set of needs - all while accepting the risk of doing so. Managing the clinical and operational dimensions of prescription medications for PHP members is challenging.

These members have complicated personal ecosystems of prescribing physicians that include primary care physicians and multiple specialists. The prescribers within this ecosystem address many physical and behavioral health issues. As a result, most PHP members take multiple medications.

Despite the benefits of prescribed medications, they represent potential risks. Hospital admissions related to medications (HARMs) account for up to 25% of all hospital admissions, the majority of which are preventable. Because its members are vulnerable, high-risk adults on multiple medications, PHP is strongly committed to the safety and continued health of these members.

Resolution

hMetrix, a Bala Cynwyd, PA-based data solutions partner, works exclusively with healthcare partners, and that focus has generated deep experience in the nuances and complexities of collecting, integrating, and analyzing healthcare data. More importantly, hMetrix works in an intense partnership model with its clients, seeking to jointly define problems and tailor data resources and processes to solve those problems. One of hMetrix' many tools is RxManager, a platform of flexible, interactive information related to prescription medications.

In the fall of 2017, Steve Deutsch, MD, the Chief Medical Officer of PHP, asked hMetrix to consider providing a unique service to PHP. Knowing the power of RxManager and the professional skills of hMetrix' clinical pharmacy staff, Dr. Deutsch realized that hMetrix could meet a critical PHP need: providing comprehensive medication therapy reviews (CMTRs) for the PHP members.

By focusing upon transition of care points or patients not meeting clinical quality goals and scheduling systematic CMTRs, PHP could use clinical pharmacy resources most efficiently. CMTRs directly address a number of clinical issues related to medication risks for PHP members. The findings of the CMTRs, shared with the prescribing ecosystem, trigger the required conversations between and among this ecosystem and the clinical pharmacists who strive to optimize patient management and safety.

1) These conversations increase the collaborative knowledge of the prescribing ecosystem, reducing future issues and creating a learning culture.

2) Preventable HARMs are reduced, impacting the quality of life of the members and reducing overall costs for PHP.

3) By reducing adverse drug events or the progression of disease, PHP concretely impacts the safety of its members and enables them to more fully pursue their fullest capabilities.

Such outcomes are driven by the clinical pharmacist's use of RxManager, which includes both clinical and pharmaceutical information, and access to the PHP clinical management system, creating the critical integration of pharmaceutical and clinical data.

Using RxManager, the clinical pharmacist is able to efficiently generate reliable lists of PHP members appropriate for medication review, based on parameters identified by the PHP Chief Medical Officer.

The pharmacist then accesses the Patient Timeline within RxManager using links to the generated list of patients. This unique component provides a graphical picture that shows all the prescribed drugs for a specified time period, the prescribing physician and dispensing pharmacy, the time intervals the patient actually filled the prescription for each drug, and any time gaps or overlaps that might have clinically important consequences. In addition, the timeline can incorporate hospitalizations, ER visits, and prescriber office visits, thus connecting the timeline with health system encounters and clinical data from claims, establishing a causal relationship between prescription and encounters. It also flags drug interactions. By combining this information with the clinical record in the PHP system, the pharmacist has a full picture of the member's clinical status and adherence to his or her medication protocol, easily generating findings for follow-up.

The clinical pharmacist then creates a priority listing of the findings, using a rigorous screening process. The pharmacist is responsible for following up on all high and medium priority findings with the prescribing physician(s). High priority findings include: (1) The current medication profile represents an immediate threat to patient's health. (2) The current medication profile, based on the member's diagnosis, may potentially cause a hospital admission. (3) The current medication profile creates a significant risk for causing disease progression with continued use.

For the high & medium priority cases, the pharmacist directly contacts the prescribing physician by phone and follows up by emailing or faxing the finding and CMTR; the pharmacist faxes the findings for low priority cases. This outreach encourages the physician to close the communication loop by updating the pharmacist on any action they take.

Partners' Perspectives

"Because the clinical pharmacist has access to the clinical information of our members through the power of RxManager," notes Dr. Deutsch, "I can be confident that the pharmacist will generate lists of appropriate PHP members for medication reviews. Most importantly, because of RxManager's unique drill down and information visualization capacity, I am confident that the pharmacist can share very granular and specific clinical findings along with medication issues with the prescribing physicians."

"As it turns out, about 62% of findings are high priority, requiring immediate contact with a prescribing physician. I have no doubt that some of these cases could have turned into hospital admissions without intervention. This shows the power of this comprehensive medication review approach. We prevented admissions, maintained the safety of our members, and educated a group of prescribers to avoid such possibilities in the future. Supported by this hMetrix service, PHP manifests our commitment to the safety of our members and refines and enhances our care to the high-need members we serve."

George Chalissery, CEO of hMetrix, notes that "Using RxManager and our clinical pharmacist resources to serve PHP members, people in much need of integrated, focused care, is extremely satisfying for us. It is a sterling example of our commitment to use technology and human resources to improve healthcare."

Takeaways

1) hMetrix' RxManager, with its combination of pharmacy and clinical claims and integration with care management records or an EHR, provides a powerful platform to review and manage prescription medication issues, creates the communication processes with prescribing physicians that lead to system-wide learning, and helps enhance patient safety and quality of life.

2) Any potential partner that has at-risk contracts and access to clinical and pharmacy claims or PDE data streams will find RxManager a productive platform to operationally and clinically manage prescription drugs. Whether responsible at a leadership level for overall costs, for fraud monitoring, or for quality compliance, or in a role as a clinical leader, care manager, or clinical pharmacist responsible for monitoring the clinical efficacy of prescription drug use, RxManager will be a powerful tool to improve care and reduce costs.

3) Healthcare organizations that seek to contract for or to offer the direct clinical pharmacy services described can explore multiple partnership relationships with hMetrix to implement and sustain such services.