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PHARMACIST PROVIDER STATUS

Washington State passes landmark pharmacist provider status law

The Washington State Pharmacy Association issued the following press release on May 11:
The Washington State Pharmacy Association (WSPA) announced on May 11 that Governor Inslee signed into law ESSB 5557. This landmark law, sponsored by State Senator Linda Parlette, is the first of its kind in the nation to require health insurance carriers to include pharmacists as network providers. This law will increase patient access to medical care from pharmacists practicing within their scope of practice. We are proud that Washington State pharmacists continue to lead the way in providing innovative, quality care to patients. This bill passed with overwhelming bipartisan support due of the leadership of Sen. Parlette, and Rep. Shelley Short, as well as partnership with the Washington State Medical Association, Washington State Hospital Association, and patient advocacy groups.

Until now, health insurance carriers only recognized pharmacists for dispensing medication. This restriction blocked patients from receiving medical care from pharmacists practicing within their scope of practice.

“Removing these barriers will allow pharmacists to directly care for patients in all practice settings,” said Jeff Rochon, Chief Executive Officer for the Washington State Pharmacy Association. “This common sense solution encourages greater collaboration among health providers and brings health care to patients in our communities.”

ESSB 5557 requires health insurance carriers to recognize pharmacists in the same way as other providers. Pharmacists care for patients by managing their chronic diseases in care teams to improve patient outcomes. Working collaboratively with other providers, pharmacists will effectively be able to provide a broad spectrum of patient care services that prevent patient harm, and reduce emergency department visits and hospital readmissions. This will greatly benefit communities with shortages of primary care physicians.

“We are excited that pharmacists will have opportunities to increase collaboration within the health care team in patient-centered medical homes and Accountable Care Organizations, with the focus being on quality and safety,” added Rochon. “This is a huge development within our healthcare system, and we’re excited that pharmacists will finally be able to utilize all our skills to help patients.”

“The passage of ESSB 5557 simply means that patients will have greater access to high quality care services. Most people only know pharmacists as their trusted prescription partner but now pharmacists will more closely partner with each patient’s medical provider as an exquisitely trained medication specialist,” stated Don Downing, Clinical Professor at the University of Washington School of Pharmacy. [ESSB 5557, 64th Washington Legislature, Reg. Sess.; Goodner K. Landmark legislation paves way for pharmacists to improve patient care. Washington State Pharmacy Association, 2011 May 11; <http://bit.ly/1FbEAp3>]