Need for Coursework in Pharmacy Curricula on Managed Care Pharmacy

I read with great interest the article by Pittenger et al. that appeared in the June 2010 issue of JMCP regarding the need for more exposure to managed care in the pharmacy curriculum.1 I share the authors’ concerns in this respect. When I was invited by the Dean of Midwestern College of Pharmacy-Glendale to assist in the opening of the new college in 1998 and to consider teaching a course in pharmacy administration, I immediately became aware of how little our pharmacy school applicants understand regarding managed health care and prescription benefit management.

Having recently (at that time) retired as Chairman/CEO of PCS Health Systems, I was well aware of the lack of understanding that exists with respect to managing pharmaceutical care. I offered to teach a course in health care administration with an emphasis on what pharmacists need to know to understand the functionality of PBMs, whether they liked them or not. I felt that it was important, as a new college of pharmacy to make certain that our students at least understood this important contemporary aspect of delivering health care. At the time I expected that I would do this for a year or two, and here it is 12 years later and I am still teaching the class. I suspect it is one of very few such courses being taught in our 100+ colleges of pharmacy in the U.S.

The class, while it is an elective, has become very popular with the students, with 60-75 students selecting the course on an annual basis. I find it very rewarding to teach the class and am very pleased that our graduates, most of them at least, have a better understanding of what they will encounter when becoming licensed pharmacists, and how best to serve their patients in a managed health care world.

I am surprised that with Minnesota often being credited as the birthplace of managed care that this important subject was not included in their curriculum many years ago. It is gratifying to note that their faculty recognize this omission and have taken steps to correct it. I would encourage every college of pharmacy in the country to include this most important subject matter in their curriculum.

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DISCLOSURES
The author reports no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES