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Community pharmacy pilot program improves blood pressure outcomes

Partnership between HealthPartners, Sterling Drug, and PharmaSmart®

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — Results from a community partnership between HealthPartners, [Sterling pharmacy](#), and PharmaSmart® show the potential of community pharmacists to improve hypertension. Nearly one in three American adults [are estimated](#) to have high blood pressure, which can cause heart failure, heart attack, stroke, and kidney damage.

The six-month pilot program included 270 HealthPartners members who had a diagnosis of hypertension and a prescription for medication to lower blood pressure at a Sterling pharmacy. Members who enrolled received a Smart Card which allowed them to routinely measure and track their blood pressure on a PharmaSmart® blood pressure kiosk inside the Sterling stores. The clinically validated PharmaSmart® kiosks contain technology to automatically transmit the data into the Sterling pharmacy clinical system. This unique integration allows pharmacists to proactively intervene on the patient's behalf by recommending a change in dose or a new medication to the patient's provider.

"One of the key findings of the pilot program is the importance of personal interaction between the patient and the pharmacist," said Tim Gallagher, President of Astrup Drug, Inc. which owns and operates Sterling pharmacies. "Pharmacists have the opportunity to extend the care team and optimize therapy to positively impact patient outcomes."

Half of participants had uncontrolled blood pressure

Nearly half of the active members in the pilot program had uncontrolled blood pressure despite the fact that they had a prescription for medication to control it. Sterling pharmacists were able to recommend a change in dose or medication to the patient's provider. As a result, blood pressure improved for about one third of patients through the course of the pilot, with a mean reduction in blood pressure among the uncontrolled group of -11 mmHg systolic and -8 mmHg diastolic.

The pilot program was implemented after a HealthPartners analysis revealed a similar gap between medication adherence and appropriate clinical outcomes. The analysis found that about 85 percent of patients with a diagnosis of hypertension had filled their prescriptions in a timely manner. However, a comparison of pharmacy claims with medical records revealed that for about one third of patients, the medication was not having the desired effect and patients still had uncontrolled blood pressure.

"It is well understood that the pharmacist can play a key role in supporting medication adherence. This pilot shows that community pharmacists can add even more value by confirming that the prescribed medication is doing what it is supposed to do," said Richard Bruzek, vice president of HealthPartners pharmacy services. Based on the promising results of the pilot program, HealthPartners is exploring program expansion in 2016.

About HealthPartners

[HealthPartners](#) is the largest consumer-governed, non-profit health care organization in the nation with a mission to improve health and well-being in partnership with members, patients and the community. For more information, visit healthpartners.com.

About Astrup Drug

Astrup Drug is the largest independently-owned community and long-term care pharmacy chain in the state of Minnesota. The company was founded in 1952 in Austin, MN and currently owns and operates 20 pharmacies in southern Minnesota and northern Iowa, operating under the names of [Sterling Drug](#) and Smart Pharmacy. For more information visit www.sterlingdrug.com.

About PharmaSmart[®]

PharmaSmart[®], headquartered in Rochester, N.Y., currently serves more than 6,500 locations, including retail pharmacies. PharmaSmart's PS DataSmart[®] Health IT database currently holds more than 40 million targeted patient blood pressure readings offering pharmacists and physicians a credible, accessible, low-cost solution for monitoring blood pressure that they can recommend to their patients. For more information visit www.PharmaSmart.com