

Support Your Local Pharmacists

By NICK NORCROSS

MPA Professional Practice Assistant

With public and private employers increasingly deciding to provide their employees with an option of patronizing mail order pharmacies, there are several reasons why you should continue to interact with your community pharmacist and pharmacy. Support your local pharmacies to keep jobs in your community and at the same time lower your health care costs.



Your Health Care and Your Pharmacist's Involvement

- As the most accessible health care professional, pharmacists play a significant role in improving your health and well-being.
- Pharmacists work with you and your physician to find the most effective and economical medications to continue the prescribed therapy.
- Pharmacists reside and practice in nearly every community – urban, suburban and rural.
- Pharmacists may provide general health screenings for blood pressure and cholesterol levels, diabetes and other conditions, assisting you in being proactive with your health.
- Pharmacists may also provide immunizations, such as the shingles or flu vaccines, to assist you in being healthy and safe.

Cost Effective Care

- Patients, after consulting with their pharmacist, are more likely to take their medication correctly, remain committed to their medication regimen and, therefore, decrease their overall health care costs.
- Pharmacists are able to assist individuals who are without insurance in acquiring cost effective medications.

Using Your Medication Safely

- Your pharmacists' extensive knowledge of treatments and medications is vital to ensure that patients use their medications safely, and that you are informed and ready to comply with your medication routine.
- Your pharmacist works to ensure that medication errors are prevented, which increases your quality of life.
- Your pharmacist will alert you as to any potential side effects of your medication therapy and what to do if they are experienced.

Why Mail Order Hurts Your Community and Could Jeopardize Your Health

- Mail order pharmacies eliminate the face-to-face interaction between you and your pharmacist and does not allow your pharmacist to communicate to you any important information that pertains to your medication, as required by the Michigan Board of Pharmacy. This can often result when patients receive many different medications from multiple sources. Without central coordination and care by your pharmacist to ensure that all of your medications work properly together, your health is at risk.
- Nearly 250 Michigan pharmacies have closed over the past two years. Prescriptions are sent to an out-of-state pharmacy that fills the order and mails to the patient. This practice does not support the state's "Buy Michigan" campaign. Your prescription is not the only entity sent out of state: business, jobs and state tax revenue go with it.
- Mail order medications are delivered to a mailbox or your door, which can create a potential for theft and/or inappropriate use. Being delivered in inclement conditions (i.e., extreme hot or cold temperatures) can also have an effect on the medication's effectiveness.
- Often, mail order pharmacies deliver a large volume of medications. Should your physician change your prescription, you are left with a large amount of medication that can no longer be used. Disposal of these unwanted medications could cause

environmental problems. Studies have found traces of medications in the water supply and ground soil due to improper disposal of medications.

How You Can Ensure That Your Pharmacy Remains a Part of Your Community

- Contact your employer or union to communicate with them about the value of your pharmacy. Let them know that you believe it is important to have the ability to have your medication therapy managed by a pharmacist whom you know and trust. Also, make sure to inform them that by frequenting one pharmacy and having one pharmacist manage your medication, it is likely that your overall health care costs could decrease, thereby decreasing costs to your employer.
- Get in touch with your federal and state legislators and advise them that the utilization of mail order pharmacies outsource jobs and hurt Michigan communities. Relay to them how mail order has already impacted Michigan over the past two years. The ability for health plans to mandate where you take your prescription also negatively impacts your community pharmacy. Discussions relating to the health of you and your family needs to be dictated on trust and not on your provider's bottom-line.
- Contact your member of Congress and indicate to them that entities that utilize federal Medicare and Medicaid dollars to fund county-wide prescription health plans should open participation up to any interested pharmacy.

For more information, ask your pharmacist!

This information is provided by Michigan Pharmacists Association and: