

Clinical pharmacists can reduce drug costs

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Clinical pharmacy services can significantly reduce the cost of prescription drugs and save money elsewhere in the health care system, according to a new study by researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

For every dollar spent by hospitals or health systems to provide clinical pharmacy services, \$4.81 was saved through lower drug costs, reductions in adverse drug events and medication errors and other savings, says Glen Schumock, associate professor and director of UIC's Center for Pharmacoeconomic Research and senior researcher on the study.

Schumock and his colleagues evaluated 93 studies published between 2001 and 2005 to uncover the impact of clinical pharmacy services, defined as services that involve direct patient care by a clinical pharmacist. Unlike traditional pharmacy services, in which a pharmacist dispenses medications, clinical pharmacists make recommendations to physicians regarding drug therapy or sometimes even help write the prescription.

Clinical pharmacy services in the studies examined were provided in hospitals, community pharmacies, nursing homes and other facilities. Such services have been available since the late 1970s but have only recently become common, Schumock said.

"The expansion of clinical pharmacy services is one potential mechanism that could be more greatly employed to curb the problem of prescription drug spending," he said.

Prescriptions in the United States cost \$287 billion in 2007, and the rising cost of drugs is often cited as a problem in the country's health care system. Health care accounted for 16 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product in 2006, costing \$2.1 trillion, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The study is published in the January issue of the journal *Pharmacotherapy*.

Source: University of Illinois at Chicago

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