



Medication Synchronization Resource Guide

Developing a med sync program in a community pharmacy

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Purpose

Medication synchronization (med sync) is the process of aligning a patient's medication fills so that they can all be conveniently picked up on the same day. Med sync is beneficial in many ways for both patient care and for pharmacies.

Many patients with chronic health conditions, especially those with multiple chronic conditions, take 6 or more prescriptions daily. Often these are filled at different times throughout the month requiring patients to visit the pharmacy multiple times. With chronic medications automatically synced to fill at the same time and day, the burden is reduced for eligible patients. Due to this convenience med sync has shown to help increase medication adherence. Med sync is also beneficial for community pharmacies by making staffing and inventory needs more predictable with scheduled fills. The purpose of this resource is to provide a guide to developing a med sync program in a community pharmacy.

For similar resources, please visit the [ASHP Community Pharmacy Practice Resource Center](#) & [Case Studies](#).

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The Value of Med Sync

For pharmacies considering implementation of a med sync program, a plan must be developed to ensure it can sustainably provide this service to its patients. All the following are ways that programs can provide value to pharmacies and thus considered when developing a plan.

- **Revenue per patient** – When patients forget to fill their prescriptions, pharmacies lose out on the revenue associated with those fills. Med sync helps patients reap the benefits associated with improved adherence, and pharmacies simultaneously capture increased revenue for their existing patient population.
- **Eligibility and enrollment parameters** - Many pharmacies determine specific parameters that patients must meet prior to enrollment. Some examples include a high number of medications, history of poor adherence, or inclusion/exclusion based on whether the patient’s insurance coverage reimburses for the service. These parameters can help target patients that would benefit the most, while also allowing the pharmacy to more closely control the number of enrolled patients. Establishing eligibility criteria can also be a strategy used to ensure the work associated with med sync remains manageable for the team members performing it.
- **High revenue medications** - Pharmacies may also develop programs specific to high revenue medications. By doing so, it increases both the medication fill rates and the probability that the incremental labor costs associated with med sync will be recovered in the revenue associated with those prescriptions. When this type of program exists, pharmacies can market these services to patients or frequent prescribers of that medication. This added service, can help capture new patients.
- **Reimbursement opportunities** – Pharmacies often use medication therapy management platforms to identify reimbursement opportunities. Many of these can be acted on during the med sync process. For

example, enrollment into med sync often includes a pharmacist performing a comprehensive medication review which is eligible for reimbursement for certain patients. In addition, pharmacists can identify adherence or relevant interventions when processing fill requests. By incorporating a review of these platforms into the med sync workflow, pharmacies can capture reimbursement for clinical services. In states where pharmacists are recognized as providers, parts of the med sync workflow may also be eligible for pharmacist reimbursement. Finally, pharmacies may be able to reduce the amount of direct and indirect remuneration fees collected by payors. These fees are often determined by performance criteria that include patient adherence measures.

- **Operational efficiency** – One of the oft cited benefits for the pharmacy when starting a med sync program is the improvement in operational efficiency. The service allows pharmacy team members to manage patient needs proactively instead of reactively which improves their ability to better prioritize work. Another benefit is the opportunity to identify and resolve medication issues before needs become urgent. In addition, it reduces the number of phone calls or trips to the pharmacy for patients with many medications.

It is important for each pharmacy to consider the needs of their patient population to understand the potential benefits and the operational impact of a med sync program.

Workflow Considerations

Ideal Workflow for Med Sync: Opting a patient in

1. Identify appropriate patient for med sync
2. Contact patient via phone call, face-to face communication or preferred means to determine patient's consent to be part of the med sync program.
 - a. Communicate opportunity for service to the patient. Include any patient specific benefits.
 - b. Ensure that the patient understands expectations and requirements.
3. Complete medication reconciliation to ensure an accurate medication record
 - a. Separate medications as maintenance and prn medications.
4. Choose an anchor date taking into consideration patient specific concerns and preferences.
5. Partial fill any medications appropriately.
6. Communicate any initial costs and/or future costs to the service if any.
7. Inform patient when they will receive medications in the following month(s).
8. Offer and coordinate other services to the patient.
 - a. Immunizations, Medication therapy management (MTM), comprehensive medication reconciliation (CMR), adherence packaging or med dose pack, etc.

Ideal Workflow for Med Sync: Refilling medication

1. On appropriate date (1 week before or a few days prior anchor date), contact patient via phone or preferred means.
 - a. Document any medication changes
 - b. Document any adherence issues
 - c. Document any patient specific concerns
2. On anchor date, adjust any medications based on patient specific factors

- a. Were they adherent?
 - b. Any new medications?
 - c. Do they need PRN meds?
 - d. Any hospitalizations?
 - e. Any new disease states?
 - f. Any concerns regarding refills that the patient needs to have addressed?
 - g. Adjust the patient's profile with active and inactive medication orders to ensure an accurate medication record
3. Refill medications as needed.
 4. Consider requesting any refills to have on file for the next appointment date.
 5. Offer additional services as necessary.

Other Operational Considerations

Pointers to consider

- Will you use a computer-based model (e.g., automated system) or paper model?
- What patient population do you serve?
 - Will the patients be able to have adjusted copays for partial fills?
 - Diabetics (strips, insulins etc.)
- What patients will you target?
 - Adherence?
 - 340b
 - Mailing
 - Families
- How many meds will you consider necessary for eligibility?

Opting patients into a program

- Consider opportunities to recruit patients for your service by using:
 - Reports
 - Automated calls
 - Messaging services
 - Face to Face interactions
- Concerns:
 - Costs
 - Med sync can decrease cost on a quarterly bases due to less uninterrupted lulls through the workday due to appointment-based model of med sync. However, it may need more personnel to ensure the successful establishment and continuation of the program.
 - Reimbursement issues (30 vs 90-day considerations)
 - Fill according to insurance (e.g., Fill If a 90-day supply can be successfully billed however a 30-day supply will do.)
 - Coupons
 - Patient may present coupons at point of sale that call for re-billing and filling the prescription.
- Who is appropriate for the service?

- High-cost medications
- Adherence issues
- Travel restrictions
- Poly Pharmacy

Best Practices

Medication synchronization is a proactive program used in many pharmacy settings. Since med sync's establishment, different models, and pharmacy management systems (PMSs) have been used to report efficiencies. The general practices that can be followed for a successful med sync program include but is not limited to assigning the task to one to two trained pharmacy personnel, maintaining patient consent forms, and ensuring that the pharmacy has a PMS for proper identification, synching, and retrieval of patient's medication information.

When training personnel, their understanding on the process of med sync from the beginning as patients' eligibility is identified, to the final step that ensures all appropriate prescriptions are filled for a one-time pick-up, determines the efficiency of the pharmacy workflow. The first predictor of medication adherence is the patient-pharmacist relationship. Therefore, the second step of documenting patient's consent using a reliable PMS determines the validity of the programs procedures as well as builds patient's autonomy and trust in the program. Lastly, a reliable pharmacy management system is one of the limiting factors for any med sync program, therefore working hand in hand with information technology of the pharmacy organization can alleviate technological errors down the line. This would ensure that eligible patients are identified, synching occurs, and personnel notify patients via phone call or preferred means, before filling their appropriate medication. Overall, understanding the above-charted Ideal workflow of med sync will ensure an efficient and rewarding med sync program. A successful med sync service would ultimately increase positive patient outcomes and revenue.

Lessons Learned

There have been many lessons learned from med sync in various pharmacy settings. This service provides improved patient adherence, increased patient engagement, increased pharmacy workflow efficiency, and ensures continuous monitoring.

1. Improved patient adherence increases positive health outcomes and reduces patient-specific and general healthcare costs.
2. Increased patient engagement permits regular communication with eligible patients and increases understanding of their condition(s) and prescriptions.
3. Increased pharmacy workflow efficiency allows pharmacy personnel to be in control of the workflow, increase efficient communication with patient's prescribers and create a proactive workday. This can be done while achieving all prescriptive duties for all patients within the pharmacy.

4. Ensures continuous monitoring by an appointment-based model (ABM) to continue long-term monitoring and make any adjustments needed in a timely manner in collaboration with prescribers and other healthcare team members.

Following the ideal outlined process mentioned above will help pharmacies implement a better pharmacy workflow to ensure medication adherence and persistence, the two quality measures currently used to reimburse various settings and to better positive patient outcomes.

References & Additional Reading:

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