

CASE STUDY

Physicians Pharmacy Alliance



CHALLENGE

For Physicians Pharmacy Alliance (PPA) to deploy a drug database and clinical support tool to help improve the quality, safety, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of care for patients with complex medical needs.

SOLUTION

Elsevier's Gold Standard Drug Database

RESULTS

With Gold Standard Drug Database as the foundation for all of its clinical drug information, PPA has improved its clinical review process, better serves its patients, and reduced costs.

The Challenge

Physicians Pharmacy Alliance (PPA) provides support to patient populations who have a high potential for poor outcomes and increased hospitalizations because of challenges in the management of their medication regimens. PPA uses an integrated, collaborative approach with providers and payers to identify and manage these high-risk patients.

PPA was utilizing a drug database that was no longer meeting its needs. The information in it was not updated frequently enough. It did not have a variety of features that PPA needed, such as bilingual support. Its data was sometimes contradictory, and the database lacked vital information, such as sufficiently detailed alerts about drug interactions, which resulted in PPA's pharmacist team having to reference alternative clinical databases to ensure the highest appropriate levels of safety and quality.

“We wanted more detailed information about drug interactions,” says Brooke Rawls, PharmD and Senior Vice President, Provider Relations & Product Development for PPA. “In many cases the database would flag an interaction as being the highest severity level, when in actuality that really wasn't the case. There wasn't

enough granularity about drug interactions to meet our needs.” Because of that deficiency, pharmacists spent excessive time doing research, including checking drug interaction information in additional databases, costing pharmacists' additional time and adding uncertainty to the process.

“Perhaps the most overarching issue was that we could not use our existing database as a clinical-decision tool,” says Rawls. “It was really only a drug reference, and was not even meeting our needs at doing that. We needed a much better solution — one that would provide more seamless clinical support and be more congruent with our needs.”

The Solution

PPA began a search for a new solution. Its first step was to define a series of business requirements, including that the new system be constantly updated and have more accurate and detailed information about drug interactions. PPA then compared multiple solutions against its needs, factoring in the cost of a new system.

It chose Elsevier's Gold Standard Drug Database because it was clearly superior to the competition. Gold Standard Drug Database was updated more frequently than the others, was easier to use, had the greatest amount of detail about drugs, and offered the most granularity regarding drug interactions. In addition, with Gold Standard Drug Database, PPA could choose among distinct specialized modules, and only pay for those that met its specific business requirements.

“It was obvious that Gold Standard Drug Database was the best system to meet our needs,” says Rawls. “Its clinical information is more specific and detailed than the others, and it is updated continuously. The system is very flexible — particularly related to the different layers of clinical capacity it offers. The modularity was a big plus as well, because we were able to choose only the modules we needed to supplement our program needs. Many other systems we reviewed were bundled products, where this system was extremely cost-effective because we only paid for those modules we needed. We are in an industry that is being squeezed by cost pressures, so the ability to customize a final product was a very important factor in our decision-making process.”

The Results

PPA uses Gold Standard Drug Database as the foundation for all clinical drug information, and the conversion has helped the company improve patient outcomes, its clinical review process, and reduce costs.

“The manner in which Gold Standard Drug Database presents drug interactions is one of its greatest benefits,” says Sarah Rhodes, PharmD and Senior Director of Clinical Services for PPA. “It has significantly cut ‘alert fatigue’. Our pharmacists can now easily see which potential interactions need to be reviewed, and which don’t, based on the categorization of the interactions. The ones that require additional clinical review and interpretation are flagged at the highest level, and pharmacists are prompted to initiate appropriate drug therapy interventions with the provider and/or patient based on their assessment of patient’s regimen and the drug interaction information.

Gold Standard Drug Database also helps pharmacists make better informed clinical decisions, such as deciding which drugs can be safely substituted for others, and for mapping brand name drugs to generic ones so that less-costly generic drugs can be substituted when appropriate.

Gold Standard Drug Database has also been key in ensuring that PPA meets the goals of its clients. For example, a health plan may contract with PPA to ensure that a specific population, such as patients

with asthma, are prescribed and use a medication to control their conditions. Since Gold Standard Drug Database has enabled us to build a customized drug therapy alert system, we are able to efficiently identify and target specific drug therapy problems for the patient population.

PPA also uses Gold Standard Drug Database to generate all patient education information, including handouts, labels, and other printed materials.

“Gold Standard Drug Database creates patient-friendly documents, which help ensure the patients take their medications properly,” says Rhodes. “Not only does it provide the important basic information, but we are even able to print out a photo of the pill, which helps patients identify the proper one to take if they are taking multiple medications.”

The photographs help pharmacists as well as patients. When a pharmacist is counseling a patient over the phone, he or she can pull up a photo of the drug being discussed, and make sure that the patient is taking the proper medication by asking questions about its appearance. PPA also uses Gold Standard Drug Database in concert with Clinical Pharmacology, which gives PPA an even greater depth and breadth of clinical information about specific drugs. Clinical Pharmacology is a referential, point-of-care drug information

solution used by more than 1,500 hospitals and over 35,000 retail pharmacies in the U.S., as well as government and managed care agencies.

PPA lauds not just Gold Standard Drug Database, but the support the company has received from Elsevier.

“Whenever we have any questions, or need additional information, Elsevier has always responded very quickly,” Rawls says. “For example, they provide us with additional photos of pills when we need them. And they provide us data in a well-organized and well documented way, which has helped us a great deal when integrating it with our own systems. It’s much more than a vendor relationship — they’ve treated us like a partner.”

Physicians Pharmacy Alliance

Elsevier

“Our relationship with Elsevier has been excellent. Their support extends beyond their products we use, including Gold Standard Drug Database and Clinical Pharmacology. They provide help when we need it and have become a true partner.”

Brooke Rawls, PharmD and Senior Vice President, Provider Relations & Product Development for PPA

Physicians Pharmacy Alliance (PPA), based in Cary, North, Carolina, is an integrated medication care management pharmacy focused on complex patient populations who have high potential for poor outcomes and increased hospitalizations due to adherence challenges and other barriers to care. PPA works directly with providers and payers to identify and manage high risk patients using an integrated and collaborative approach.

Elsevier is the industry leader for the most current, accurate and reliable drug product and pricing information. Elsevier's Gold Standard Drug Database features true daily updates with price data reported directly from pharmaceutical manufacturers and updated as changes are received, including weekends and holidays.

For more information, please:

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