From the CEO

NCPA exists to be the voice of community pharmacy—small business owner health care providers caring for the people in their communities and neighborhoods. This report highlights our activities in 2014 and, while the coming year will continue to present no shortage of opportunities and challenges, community pharmacy will persevere just as it has before. We will continue to demonstrate our value and we will evolve as the circumstances around us change. All the while, NCPA is here with you as the megaphone for your voice.

NCPA CEO
B. Douglas Hoey, Pharmacist, MBA

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GOAL I. Independent community pharmacists are recognized/valued as part of health care solutions.

Independent community pharmacies stood out with industry-leading customer satisfaction ratings, according to both the J.D. Power 2014 U.S. Pharmacy Study™ and a survey conducted by Consumer Reports. NCPA promoted these findings at every possible opportunity.

NCPA also educated policymakers, payers, health care providers, stakeholders, the media and patients about the community pharmacists’ critical role through aggressive outreach campaigns. NCPA was quoted or referenced during 2014 by the media 400+ times in newspapers and on TV and countless times on blogs and other Internet sites. NCPA’s message has been covered in influential publications such as The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and The Washington Post. We have posted 180+ messages via the NCPA Facebook page and 700+ tweets via Twitter. A global tweet-a-thon about pharmacists helping patients, initiated by NCPA, generated 11,182 tweets in one day, on which #pharmacist became the #1 “trending” health care hashtag.

In addition, NCPA paid advertisements appeared in Politico, Roll Call and other key media outlets.

GOAL II. Public policy and legislation barriers to success affecting the practice of independent community pharmacy and its patients are mitigated.

NCPA surveyed the membership for its top legislative concerns.

First cited were Medicare Part D “preferred pharmacy” networks that exclude community pharmacies. NCPA convinced Medicare officials that “any willing pharmacy” should be allowed to participate in all of the program’s pharmacy networks. The agency postponed, for now, making that a requirement for drug plan sponsors and PBMs. So NCPA turned to Capitol Hill. Bipartisan legislation (H.R. 4577) was introduced and 80 cosponsors were secured. NCPA-commissioned polling found 76 percent of likely voters support any willing pharmacy legislation, and a leading economist outlined how such a policy could even reduce Medicare costs by fostering more competition. Radio and online advertisements were produced for use by pharmacists. NCPA continues to lead a unified and coordinated campaign with community pharmacy partners. As a direct result of these efforts, far more Medicare drug plans feature independent and regional chain pharmacies as “preferred” pharmacies in 2015. However, more progress is required so this issue remains a focal point for NCPA.

Second was the delayed increase to MAC payment rates when generic prices go up. At NCPA’s urging, Medicare announced it will require PBMs to update MAC lists every seven days, starting with 2016 drug plans. We pressed Congress to hold hearings on this issue and on Nov. 20 one was held by a key Senate subcommittee and an NCPA member pharmacist.
testified. In addition, bipartisan legislation (H.R. 4437 and H.R. 5815) was introduced. Major media attention was generated on this issue as well, including The New York Times, CBS Evening News and many other outlets. State progress occurred, too (see below).

Other federal advocacy highlights included:
- The Department of Labor ERISA Advisory Council heard testimony from NCPA and major employers on PBM problems. As a result, it recommended new disclosure by PBMs.
- Community pharmacist elected to Congress - NCPA held campaign fundraisers that raised $150,000+ for Rep.-elect Buddy Carter (R-Ga.). An NCPA staffer volunteered her own time to help on Election Day.
- To ease the transition of hydrocodone products to Schedule II, NCPA partnered with physician and other pharmacy groups to develop comprehensive pharmacist and prescriber guidelines.
- USA Today published an excellent lay-person explanation of PBM problems.
- Fought efforts to steer more TRICARE patients to mail order.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recognized community pharmacists in a joint announcement with NCPA, as “multifaceted health care providers who represent a vital part of the United States’ health care delivery system, often caring for people in underserved rural and inner-city communities.”

At the state level, NCPA supported 11 new MAC laws and continues to stand up for Iowa’s law in the face of PBM litigation. New MAC laws in Oklahoma and Washington also address PBM registration, audits and more. North Dakota voters and pharmacists, with support from NCPA, affirmed in a ballot initiative their support for the state’s requirement that pharmacies be owned by pharmacists. NCPA continues to foster partnerships with NACDS, NASPA and now Pfizer on state medication synchronization legislation.

NCPA will advocate for your livelihood and your patients’ well-being in 2015 and beyond.

**GOAL III.** Member benefits lead to improved skills, knowledge and resources to better serve patients and be successful.

Over 3,000 pharmacies are utilizing the free NCPA Digital Pharmacist Solution, powered by RxWiki, to access no-cost website, social media and customizable mobile content solutions to deliver health information to patients. Pharmacies are also taking advantage of additional, discounted paid services like mobile-optimized websites and in-store video to help broaden their reach to patients.

Currently, 2,200 pharmacies are providing coordinated refill services to 80,000+ patients through NCPA’s Simplify My Meds® program, reporting enhanced business efficiencies and improved profitability. NCPA published a med sync marketing toolkit and public opinion survey documenting the program’s appeal and suggested ways to grow consumer enrollment.

The NCPA Front-End Overhaul member service program has provided more than 4,500 NCPA members with targeted information on front-end merchandising, marketing, store floor plan and layout advice. Front-End Profit Building Seminars around the country and in Puerto Rico drew a collective 550 attendees. The Daily Pharmacy Planning Guide was published to bring together 365+ merchandising tips and more to boost pharmacy profits year-round.

NCPA enhanced its bookstore with three major new products: The Daily Pharmacy Planning Guide (see above); A Pharmacy’s Guide to 340B Contract
Pharmacy Services Best Practices—free to members; and U.S. Pharmacopeia’s USP Compounding Compendium—a must for any compounding pharmacy, with the 795 and 797 chapters.

Over 1,300 users have registered to date with PharmacyMatching.com, a free website matching potential buyers and sellers of independent pharmacies and those seeking pharmacy employment.

The Good Neighbor Pharmacy NCPA Pruitt-Schutte Student Business Plan Competition drew entries from 42 schools and colleges of pharmacy in the 11th year of the contest.

NCPA’s Long-Term Care (LTC) Division continues to advocate for fair compensation for “short-cycle” prescriptions, which require just as much work as traditional prescriptions. We will continue to monitor Medicare activity on this front. Other top issues include disposal of controlled substances; rescheduling of hydrocodone-containing products; and prior authorizations for Medicare beneficiaries who have elected the hospice benefit.

Continuing education opportunities were made available online at Pharmacist e-Link®, via America’s Pharmacist® magazine and at NCPA meetings:

Events and Meetings

Multiple Locations Pharmacy Conference—More than 100 multi-store owners, single pharmacy owners, and buying groups representing 10,000+ pharmacies met in Naples, Fla. to discuss current issues affecting store expansion.

Annual Conference on National Legislation and Government Affairs—More than 300 pharmacists gathered in the nation’s capital to conduct over 500 meetings on Capitol Hill and advocate for patient choice.

Annual Convention and Trade Exposition—3,000+ attendees convened in Austin, Texas to achieve the event’s goals to Meet. Learn. Succeed., including 20 contact hours of accredited education. In conjunction with the meeting, the “Networking for High-Performance Pharmacies” program was held. It brought together leading community pharmacists, payers, and other experts for productive dialogue and interaction to advance best practices in clinical community pharmacy and prepare community pharmacists to be part of future networks based on quality of care and health outcomes.

NCPA hosted three Diabetes Accreditation Standards-Practical Applications (DASPA) programs, featuring a case management approach to patient care and a pathway to completing accreditation to bill Medicare for DSME/T services.

LTC Business Fundamentals program—Two events were offered, teaching pharmacists how to efficiently and profitably provide long-term care services.

Three Pharmacy Ownership Workshops, sponsored by McKesson, were hosted, drawing 208 attendees.

NCPA uses a number of communication vehicles to provide information and resources to members, including America’s Pharmacist magazine, eNews Weekly, Executive Update, and Advocacy Alert newsletters.