

Strengthening the connection between pharmacy and health care

Our team is changing the way pharmacy care is offered — making this primary consumer touchpoint more accessible and affordable.

It's easy to understand why the pharmacy ranks among the most frequent consumer touch points in health care. [Half of Americans take at least one prescription drug each month](#) and [40% of U.S. adults are managing two or more chronic conditions](#). Perhaps researchers weren't surprised when they found that visits to [pharmacies outnumbered trips to a primary care doctor two to one](#).

Every interaction between the health system and an individual is a precious opportunity to impact overall health. That means contact with your pharmacy — whether in person, online or by phone — can represent much more than a simple transaction.

That's why we focus on [treating the whole person](#), not just filling the prescription.

It's clear that pharmacy is going to play a growing role in the design and delivery of better health care for everyone. That's why [OptumRx](#) is focusing on three important areas: tailoring experiences to evolving consumer expectations, simplifying what it takes to access specialty medication, and better integrating pharmacy and mental health needs.

 *See the whole person, not the condition*

What's the role of pharmacies in whole person care? [Hear Dr. Dutta's perspective, as told to the Washington Post.](#)

Meeting new and emerging consumer expectations

Our pharmacy care services business connects directly with over 700,000 individuals every day. Serving this many people is a huge responsibility. It's also a considerable challenge. That's why we're doing our part to up the game in terms of convenience, cost savings and community.

Convenience without sacrificing support

While home delivery of medications has always offered [convenience and cost savings](#), it gained new meaning during the COVID-19 pandemic. We saw a notable increase in the demand for home delivery service in 2020, and it will continue to be a critical part of satisfying growing consumer preferences.

But valuable innovation lies in pairing delivery options with virtual support. Telehealth solutions offer individuals with [OptumRx](#) prescription benefits the chance to talk with pharmacists about their medications, drug interactions, dosing and side effects.

They also create opportunities to enhance personalized care over the phone with our [Next Best Action](#) program, enabling call center agents to make actionable, data-driven health recommendations to individuals in near real-time.



Anticipating the needs of members

Watch how we use predictive modeling and machine learning to provide simple, affordable and personal care, in turn helping us improve experiences and outcomes for everyone we serve while reducing the total cost of care.

Supporting medication affordability

Even when we place consumer experience front and center, we won't realize the value of additional services if someone does not fill their prescription. In fact, [one out of four people still struggle to afford their medication](#).

Those with insurance are often at an advantage when it comes to medication costs, but even insured individuals may struggle with the price of deductibles and copays.

One way to save money on prescriptions is through [discount cards](#). [Optum® Perks](#), now offered digitally and free to all Americans — including those without a pharmacy benefit — allows users to search savings on current prescriptions.

This easy-to-use web and mobile solution offers savings accepted at more than 67,000 pharmacies across the country.

Another option is to increase awareness of lower-cost alternatives. [MyScript Finder™](#) is a digital tool available to those with OptumRx benefits. Members can use MyScript Finder to locate the best medication at the best price, based on their plan.

Using MyScript Finder is leading to an average member savings of \$40 per prescription.

Building community

If the pandemic has underscored anything, it's that we still need community, even when we are at a distance. Individuals managing complex conditions and those in need of specialty medications now have a place for support.

The [Optum Connections](#) video series serves up virtual resources catered to the needs and experiences of members with specific conditions, from cancer to hemophilia to multiple sclerosis and more.

Members can get help to better understand their condition, how to prevent and manage side effects, and get lifestyle and nutrition support. Being apart does not mean confronting conditions on your own.

Administering specialty medications outside of the hospital at other care sites—such as the home, infusion clinics, or the physician's office—

can improve care and lower costs by



\$4 billion

Enhancing support for the increased use of specialty medication

A growing number of people need specialty drugs — complex medications that have special administration and management considerations. These drugs offer tremendous hope but often at very high costs.

It's becoming more and more critical to focus on delivering [specialty pharmacy solutions](#) that meet a patient's needs while also managing their total cost of care.

Optum uses pharmacy, lab, medical benefit data and more to create a 360-degree view of each patient. This complete picture helps clinicians in two crucial pharmacy care areas that impact individuals' overall experience and costs. They are:

- **Medication decision support:** Personalized insights can support the prescribing physician's decision-making by offering detailed clinical guidance to select the best medication.
- **Care location decision support:** Analytics help guide the physician and patients toward the best care setting for administering these medications. This may be the patient's own home.

In 2020, our Optum® Infusion Pharmacy nurses made 20,000 visits per month to patient homes. The convenience and cost savings gained by individual patients for whom home visits were an option will likely drive continued interest and growth in this type of pharmacy care.

Genoa Healthcare by the numbers



Integrating pharmacy with mental health services in the community

One in five people in the United States are living with a mental health diagnosis, and one in 20 have what is considered a serious and persistent mental health challenges, such as schizophrenia, bipolar or borderline personality disorder.

Taking medications as prescribed can help these individuals avoid unnecessary emergency room visits, hospitalizations and even death. But people with serious mental illness often lack reliable transportation, housing or a support system to help them stay on track.

Our [Genoa Healthcare](#) pharmacies, embedded in community mental health clinics, provide a higher level of pharmacy support, which results in a more than 90% medication adherence rate, 18% fewer emergency room visits and 40% fewer hospitalizations.

In this model, the pharmacist is on site and part of the care team, providing real-time consultation on medications to providers and patients.

In addition, they provide medications in pre-filled pill organizers customized for the individual. And because transportation can be a barrier to high quality care, pharmacists sync medication refills to therapy appointments and proactively reach out with refill reminders to avoid gaps in care.

We now have nearly 600 pharmacies in 47 states across the U.S. and Washington, D.C., and we're continuing to expand this unique model of pharmacy care.

Our expansion will provide pharmacy care to populations living with complex conditions that require several medications, including seniors in assisted living communities.

Toward a whole person health system

At Optum, we have a long history of innovation when it comes to pharmacy care and benefits. Yet, we know more can be done to focus on the whole person and strengthen the connection between pharmacy and care services.

Learn more about what's on the horizon in **transforming pharmacy care** through OptumRx and dive into other health care system areas on **our blog**.



Dr. Sumit Dutta

Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, OptumRx

Dr. Sumit Dutta's primary responsibilities include executive level oversight of clinical strategy, leading the OptumRx Clinical Services team and guiding its tactical and strategic endeavors to improve outcomes and lower overall health care costs.

Dr. Dutta earned his medical degree from Michigan State University and his Master of Business Administration from New York University, Stern School of Business. He completed his internship at the University of Chicago Hospitals and Clinics and his residency at Rush Medical Center. He practiced internal medicine at New York University Health Center.