Pharmacy Workgroup (PharmWG) Charter

Purpose

The PharmWG will bring together organizations committed to improving healthcare delivery by fostering greater pharmacy interoperability.

Background

Our nation faces a primary care shortage, and patients are diagnosed with chronic conditions more than ever before. Pharmacists play an important role in addressing these challenges by providing clinical services as members of integrated care teams and serving as essential patient care providers in communities. However, pharmacy practice settings are unique and often disconnected from the rest of the health care team, which makes information sharing a challenge in today's landscape, especially for community/retail pharmacies. Broader interoperability is needed to align with how care is being delivered today and further enable pharmacists to fill gaps in care.

As a member of the healthcare team, pharmacists need to be able to participate in clinical information exchange with others, such as medical offices, hospitals, and payers. Evidence shows that pharmacists can increase access to care, improve patient outcomes, and lower the cost of care. Patient interactions are strengthened when pharmacists have the right clinical information at the right time to inform health care recommendations and interventions. Pharmacists can then strengthen the encounters other providers have with patients by documenting and sharing key information from their patient interactions. Clinical information exchange is also essential for pharmacist participation in value-based care because it captures the contributions pharmacists make to improve patient outcomes, control costs and advance the overall quality of care.

Advancements in interoperability are needed to truly unlock patient care potential at pharmacies and achieve nationwide health information sharing. In recognition of this need, the Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy/Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology's Health Information Technology Advisory Committee (HITAC) formed a Pharmacy Interoperability and Emerging Therapeutics Task Force in June 2023. The task force identified and made several recommendations that would support and improve interoperability between pharmacists and other constituents for pharmacy-based clinical services and care coordination.

In response to growing interest across the healthcare industry in solving pharmacy interoperability challenges, the Sequoia Project has created a pharmacy community of practice with support and collaboration from members and sponsors. This workgroup will focus on pharmacy practice settings identified to have the greatest needs for improvement in information exchange, such as community/retail pharmacies. As the workgroup progresses, participants may address other areas of pharmacy (e.g. hospitals, LTC, SNF, school nurses) to broadly improve pharmacy interoperability today and in the future.

Background Resources

The following reports characterize the pharmacy interoperability landscape today and provide recommendations for how to overcome shared challenges:

- [NCPDP Foundation White Paper on Current Pharmacy Technology Landscape](#) (Point of Care Partners)
- [Guidance Document on Pharmacy Interoperability](#) (Pharmacy HIT Collaborative)
- [Pharmacy Interoperability and Emerging Therapeutics Task Force 2023 Report to the Health Information Technology Advisory Committee](#)
- [Supporting Pharmacy Data Interoperability: An Imperative for Patient Access and Outcomes](#) (Leavitt Partners)

Strategic Goals

Support The Sequoia Project's mission of advancing interoperability by fostering and broadening pharmacy interoperability across the healthcare ecosystem:

1. Identify and close gaps in pharmacy interoperability readiness and adoption.
2. Identify and operationalize the information pharmacists need to access and share with other providers and payers.
3. Develop practical guidance to remove barriers to providing clinical services at scale.
4. Share learnings and best practices across healthcare stakeholders to encourage implementation and uptake.

Key Deliverables

The PharmWG will focus on the following key areas:

#	Deliverable	Additional Commentary
1	Visual Overview of Current Pharmacy Interoperability Landscape	Develop a visual overview of how pharmacy interoperability works today, including where efforts are underway to advance pharmacy interoperability. This is intended to serve as a reference for the workgroup and external stakeholders as they discuss and work toward a shared future vision for pharmacy interoperability.

2	Use Cases for Pharmacist-Provided Patient Care Services	The workgroup will discuss, identify, and document a series of use-cases for pharmacy participation in clinical information exchange (e.g. TEFCA). Each use case will address the technology, standards, and minimum data sets needed to support patient care services provided by a pharmacist.
3	Roadmap to a Preferred Future for Pharmacy Interoperability	The roadmap will summarize and prioritize key steps and recommendations (i.e., policies) for advancing a preferred future for pharmacy interoperability. The roadmap will build upon the first two workgroup deliverables by outlining strategies to address gaps in readiness and adoption.

Proposed Roadmap

The PharmWG will meet virtually on a monthly basis. The PharmWG meetings will provide a forum for educational discussion and serve as a critical mechanism for building alignment and making progress toward deliverables. Meetings will be scheduled for 90 minutes, with the intent of reserving the last 30 minutes for any remaining discussion and Task Group work focused on specific deliverables. Below is a high-level overview of how workgroup meetings will progress.

Timing	Focus	Description & Action
Phase #1	Introductions & Orientation	Review & Discuss WG Goals, Deliverables, and Roadmap
	Foundation Building	Pharmacy Practice Overview & Discussion
	Foundation Building	Pharmacy Interoperability Overview & Discussion
Phase #2	Landscape Review	Summarize & Discuss Existing Recommendations & Opportunities for Advancing Pharmacy Interoperability
	Visual Overview	Review & Refine a Visual Overview of Pharmacy Interoperability & Efforts Underway
Phase #3	Use-Cases	Develop & Refine Use Cases for Pharmacist-Provided Patient Care Services
Phase #4	Roadmap	Discuss & Align Key Next Steps & Recommendations

Over the course of the first year, the PharmWG will have an emphasis on education and alignment. Presentations from participants and other invited speakers will educate PharmWG members on the current and future interoperability landscape and how existing and emerging pharmacy care models could be integrated. The PharmWG will also prioritize the visual overview to establish a strong understanding of the current pharmacy interoperability landscape for both participants and external audiences. The PharmWG is expected to be in Phase #3 by the end of year one, with the roadmap and other initiatives to be addressed in year two.

Planned Outcomes

In addition to the deliverables described above, planned outcomes include:

- Participants will collaborate with a diverse group of stakeholders to identify, discuss, and align on opportunities to increase pharmacy participation in health information exchange.
- Participants will have a stronger understanding of the role pharmacists play in patient care and opportunities to improve pharmacy interoperability.
- Participants will be equipped to champion solutions and build partnerships that advance pharmacy interoperability and scale clinical pharmacy services.

Anticipated Impact

- Increase awareness of the role pharmacists play as a member of the care team and the importance of information exchange with pharmacists by disseminating workgroup deliverables to Sequoia members and through other channels, such as PharmWG participant communication channels, presentations, and LinkedIn.
- Inform future discussions about pharmacy interoperability by illustrating how health information is exchanged with pharmacists today, including the existing standards, systems, and processes in place to support patient care activities.
- Accelerate implementation of pharmacy use cases that enable patient care by creating a space for broad stakeholder discussion, prioritization, and mobilization.

Workgroup Composition

The PharmWG will be composed of a diverse group of stakeholders including practicing pharmacists, pharmacies, pharmacy groups, pharmacy systems vendors, third-party pharmacy vendors, EHRs, standards organizations, networks, payers, government agencies and others.

Workgroup Responsibilities & Operating Principles

In its role as a Workgroup for The Sequoia Project's Interoperability Matters cooperative, the PharmWG members will fulfill the following responsibilities:
- Maintain personal involvement in Workgroup and Task Group meetings and related activities;
- Respect any confidential discussion held in the Workgroup and Task Groups;
- Contribute to the development of Task Group deliverables by providing substantive feedback, subject matter expertise, and drafting assistance;
- Share progress with the Member Forum through public forums;
- Accept assignments and tasks between meetings;
- Respect diversity, as there are many different perspectives;
- Listen and speak respectfully and share their points of view.

Decision-Making and Relationship to Interoperability Matters and The Sequoia Project

The PharmWG will operate under the authority and guidance of The Sequoia Project Board and Interoperability Matters Steering Committee. It will also actively seek input from a wide range of stakeholders, subject matter experts, and other Interoperability Workgroups (e.g. Consumer Engagement) when appropriate.

The PharmWG will be organized and operate in a manner that is compliant with applicable antitrust laws and its deliberations will be confined to topics that are consistent with these legal requirements. The PharmWG will aim to reach consensus, where possible, and will capture differing views. Regardless of whether there is consensus, the PharmWG will ensure that diverse stakeholder views are heard. Areas of agreement will be identified, and divergent views captured. Where there is no consensus, the group will move issues forward by such approaches as identifying a range of issues raised within the PharmWG and considering recommendations for further study to move towards consensus.

Workgroup Leadership and Staffing

PharmWG leadership includes:
- Co-Chairs: Meg Murphy (Surescripts) and Pooja Babbrah (NCPDP)
- Steering Committee: Co-chairs plus Melanie Marcus (Surescripts), Kevin Nicholson (NACDS) and Lisa Schwartz (NCPA)
- WG Lead: Meg Murphy (Surescripts)
- WG Coordinator: Amber Nava (Sequoia)
- Program Lead: Bren Shipley (Sequoia)

Co-Chair duties include:
- Leading and facilitating Workgroup efforts, including the development, review, and maintenance of deliverables;
- Facilitating Workgroup meetings in a manner that assures that all members are actively contributing to the Workgroup's efforts;
- Enabling balanced opportunities for all members to contribute to the discussions and minimizing a few individuals from dominating the discussion;
- Conducting the work in a manner that is efficient, in accordance with the work plan; and
- Meeting with Sequoia staff prior to each Workgroup meeting to prepare the agenda and discussion topics.