

ASHP Research and Education Foundation's *Pharmacy Forecast*: An essential resource for pharmacy practice

The release of *Pharmacy Forecast 2017* marks two major milestones: completion of the fifth year of the report's annual publication and expanded access to the report through its publication in *AJHP*. I am grateful to the *AJHP* editors for suggesting that the report be published here and for their cooperation in retaining the report's concise and forcefully expressive style, which allows practitioners to quickly get to the heart of a trend and its strategic implications. The stature and global reach of *AJHP* will expand the visibility and influence of the *Pharmacy Forecast*.

ASHP Research and Education Foundation's ("the Foundation's") conceptualization and creation of the *Pharmacy Forecast* were not casual matters. One of the Foundation's strategic priorities is to "drive the advancement of the . . . leadership competencies of pharmacists . . . in complex and rapidly changing organizations." A core function of practice leadership is strategic planning, and an essential part of strategic planning is environmental scanning, as reflected in the *Pharmacy Forecast*.

Surveying the environment "in complex and rapidly changing organizations" is challenging because it must be done from two perspectives: from the trenches, where immediate operational issues are experienced, and from a higher vantage point, where emerging trends can be spotted. The latter perspective is offered by *Pharmacy Forecast*, which filters the background signals from the environment and amplifies those that are likely to have a major bearing on pharmacy practice within the next several years.

The operational model of the Foundation is well equipped to support projects such as *Pharmacy Forecast*. By receiving charitable contributions from pharmacists, industry sources, ASHP, and others, and by prioritizing projects that align with its strategic priorities, the Foundation supports an array of research, educational initiatives, and practice resources consistent with its vision for pharmacy: "Patient outcomes improve because of the leadership and clinical skills of pharmacists, as vital members of the healthcare team, accountable for safe and effective medication use." The Foundation's activities are a strong complement to ASHP's numerous programs to advance pharmacy practice.

It is striking how well aligned *Pharmacy Forecast 2017* is with a recent high-profile initiative on priorities in national health policy. Cognizant of potential opportunities and challenges related to the 2016 U.S. elections, the Vital Directions for Health and Health Care initiative of the National Academy of Medicine assessed 19 priority areas of health policy.¹ To cite an example of this connection, consider the following excerpt from one of the Vital Directions discussion papers:

A workforce committed to improving population health will require new roles and expertise outside the traditional boundaries of public health. . . . A workforce oriented toward health promotion and health protection will need skills in assessing and addressing social determinants of health, and will need knowledge of effective prevention strategies, and will need the ability to communicate . . .²

Aligning the pharmacy enterprise (including its work force) with the imperative to improve population health is a major thread in the strategic recommendations of the current and previous editions of the *Pharmacy Forecast*.

Pharmacy Forecast 2017 addresses many hot-button issues in health-system pharmacy. These include the opioid crisis, precision medicine, pharmacist prescribing, value-based formulary decisions, and effects of the U.S. presidential election.

When engaging in strategic planning, it is important for practice leaders to consult all recent editions of the *Pharmacy Forecast* because each deals with different issues and covers recommendations developed for a five-year time frame. To reinforce this point, consider that the following topics are among those explored in previous editions: ambulatory care, team-based care, payment reform, specialty pharmaceuticals, biosimilars, quality indicators, electronic health records, data analytics, patient empowerment, and ethical challenges. All editions of the report are accessible at www.ashpfoundation.org/pharmacyforecast.

As healthcare organizations plan for the future, they need the leaders of the pharmacy enterprise to be fully engaged in strategic thinking related to pharmacy and the overall mission of the organization. The *Pharmacy Forecast* is designed to help the pharmacy team stay ahead of emerging trends and thereby continually improve the health and well-being of patients and the sustainability of the healthcare organizations that care for them.

1. National Academy of Medicine. Vital directions for health and health care. <https://nam.edu/initiatives/vital-directions-for-health-and-health-care> (accessed 2016 Oct 3).
2. Lipstein SH, Kellermann AL, Berkowitz B et al. Workforce for 21st century health and health care: a vital direction for health and health care (September 19, 2016). <https://nam.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Workforce-for-21st-Century-Health-and-Health-Care.pdf> (accessed 2016 Oct 3).

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DOI 10.2146/ajhp160851