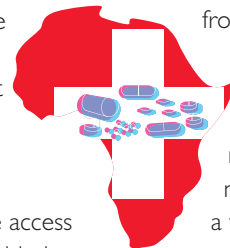




ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE IN AFRICA

16 - 18 APRIL 2008

In April 2008, LEIGHTON McDONALD, Qualsa's Client Executive, attended a three-day conference that was held to discuss the status of healthcare delivery in Southern Africa, with specific reference to the provision of HIV care in the public sector. The aim was to share information on the issue in order to allow for a more effective response. The conference was organised by ARV Access for Africa in collaboration with the World Health Organisation. Speakers were from a diverse background, with the majority representing donor agencies, non-governmental organisations and departments of health. Leighton represented Qualsa Healthcare at the event as a key player within the healthcare private sector. There was also significant representation from the South African Department of Health (at provincial department level).



CONFERENCE CONTENT

The conference focussed on the access to and quality of healthcare provided to patients in the public sector, with frequent questions of whether this could be considered to be First World or Third World medicine. The following aspects of care were considered:

Medication

This included discussion on generic medicines and the measures in place internationally to ensure the quality of these products. Donor agencies, specifically the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria, have a number of pre-qualification criteria that need to be adhered to (by generic medicine manufacturers) in order for medicine to be included on an approved list. Donor recipients not procuring medicines according to these guidelines will be penalised financially.

Counterfeit medicine is a significant problem globally but much of this medicine is sent to developing countries. The importance of adherence to a structured procurement policy was stressed.

There was extensive discussion on quality of medicines, and medication guidelines - the point stressed repeatedly was that any compromise in quality has adverse cost implications by way of costly management of disease complications.

Professional healthcare services

There is a critical shortage of healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses) in Southern Africa - the situation being much worse in the rural areas where the need is great. Strategies for attracting and retaining these healthcare professionals were discussed, along with how to use the current capacity in an optimal manner. The concept of "task shifting" was raised - this essentially involves a departure from the structured roles and responsibilities of healthcare professionals, e.g. using pharmacist assistants as adherence counsellors, rather than doctors, pharmacists or nurses. This concept will most likely be a focus in future strategic planning.

The important role that traditional healers play in the community was discussed, with general agreement that their effectiveness could be optimised through intelligent collaboration between themselves and the western medical model. Traditional healers can, for example, identify cases requiring referral to a doctor for management.

Quality of care

The conference concluded with a focus on quality of care and how this can be achieved. Leighton presented on behalf of Qualsa, focussing on quality of care in the private sector and the role that managed care plays in supporting and monitoring this. There are a number of common issues facing the public and private sectors - increased collaboration could assist in addressing these.

There is considerable scope for public-private partnerships in developing capacity and ensuring quality in the field of healthcare.

IN summary, the conference was valuable through the role it played highlighting the following issues:

- The challenges being faced in the delivery of high quality and effective healthcare to the population.
- The excellent work being carried out by the selfless individuals and organisations in some fields.
- The similar issues being faced by the public and private healthcare sectors.
- The need to consider population-based healthcare services rather than the delivery of a reactive service for the management of infectious diseases and chronic illness.

Keep in CONTACT

To ensure that you remain up-to-date with industry news, it is important that your contact details listed with the relevant industry bodies are current.

Should you prefer to receive a printed copy of this publication, or have any questions or comments, please e-mail talk2me@qualsa.co.za

Inspiration by WISE

A WORD FROM QUALSA PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFIT MANAGEMENT

Process enhancements that lower costs

With the recent rise in fuel prices and interest rates, we are all striving for the same objectives - reducing costs wherever possible.

Administrators and schemes are aware of escalating costs and in a bid to reduce costs for all stakeholders, Qualsa's Pharmaceutical Benefit Management has enhanced the membership validation process, which we believe will reduce costs to all parties.

You, as a pharmacist, can play a role in reducing overall expenditure by complying with system prompts as costs associated with the reversal of claims negatively impacts on all parties.

If you have any queries regarding the QPBM system or processes, kindly contact us on (021) 480 4485, fax us on (021) 480 6861, or email us at pbmqueries@mhg.co.za



Critical role of General Practitioners in a SEA of CHANGE

Healthcare systems around the world face a myriad of challenges. At the core of these challenges is the ability to provide access to quality and affordable healthcare. A 2006 report by IBM Global Business Services maintains that many healthcare systems around the world will become unsustainable by 2015 unless they are able to adapt successfully. It is therefore not surprising that transformation characterises many healthcare systems as they adapt in response to various drivers of change. One of the fundamental drivers of this change both internationally and locally is the shifting nature of disease.

Changing burden of disease
With 60% of global deaths now attributable to chronic disease, healthcare systems need to expand their current focus on episodic acute care to encompass the enhanced management of chronic disease and proactive lifestyle choices that support the prevention of illness. Dr Khaya Gobinca, managing director of Qualsa - a leading managed healthcare company servicing almost 1.7 million medical scheme beneficiaries - believes general practitioners (GPs) have a critical role to play in transforming the system into one that can successfully manage this shift in the nature of disease.

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An analysis of diseases by cost and frequency conducted by Qualsa across their membership base shows that the most expensive diseases are related to sedentary lifestyles, diet excesses and other diet-related factors.

Dr Gobinca says their analysis reveals that the most expensive diseases include coronary artery disease, hypertension, hyperlipidaemia or dyslipidaemia, diabetes mellitus, asthma, depression and chronic back pain. These are not only the most expensive diseases, but also the most commonly occurring, along with pneumonia, gastroenteritis and urinary tract infections.

Lifestyle solutions such as exercise, posture and weight control can be of great value, especially in the case of back pain. A further lifestyle choice, smoking, is an aggravating factor in cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, as well as cancer; which also finds its way onto the list. The analysis suggests that management of the highest cost and more frequent diseases lies, to a large extent, in the areas of sustainable lifestyle and behavioural changes.

The health consumer transformation

The successful transformation of the South African healthcare system will certainly require changes in consumers' attitudes and behaviours, as they take more personal responsibility for their health. But how will this happen? The vast numbers of failed new year's resolutions are evidence of just how difficult any form of lifestyle or behavioural change is. The simple principle of 'healthy staff translating into healthy profits' has put employee healthcare at the top of most companies' strategic agendas. However, research done by Qualsa amongst employers last year, shows that while a huge amount of education and communication about healthy lifestyle choices is taking place in the workplace, it often falls on deaf ears and fails to create the necessary behavioural change it was designed to achieve. While all stakeholders in the healthcare system need to get involved in identifying health risk and helping patients make long-term lifestyle changes, there is one stakeholder who has a central role to play - the GP.

CRITICAL ROLE OF GP AS COORDINATOR OF CARE

Dr Gobinca points to the critical role doctors need to play in the successful transformation of the current system, as the focus shifts to the enhanced management of chronic disease and proactive lifestyle choices that support the prevention of illness. He also believes evidence-based medicine (identifying and

applying the best available practices to treat common conditions) will need to become more established with proven protocols of care applied for optimal resource usage and improved outcomes.

If the transformation of the healthcare system is to succeed, all stakeholders - including managed healthcare organisations like Qualsa - need to become actively involved in driving the desired change. This was the rationale behind the launch of the Qualsa Patient Knowledge Initiative - part of Qualsa's contribution towards educating and supporting the medical scheme members that they manage. It consists of education and communication at various levels, including an award-winning member website with a wealth of content, which includes health risk assessments, advice on prevention and guidance on managing high-risk chronic conditions. Dr Gobinca points out: "While the GP always plays the central role as the coordinator of care, given the enormity of the task, our Patient Knowledge Initiative at least supports the GP for the large numbers of medical scheme members whom we service." Another area where Qualsa believes they can support the GP is the provision of medical guidelines and protocols on the major chronic conditions. Qualsa will continue to work closely with the provider community - and in particular the GP - as the healthcare system transforms to meet the myriad of formidable challenges on the table. ■



The Government Employee Medical Scheme (GEMS) is the fastest growing medical scheme in the country and we would like to introduce Friends of GEMS - a preferred provider registry that you can benefit from.

THE PROGRAMME, which is designed to benefit both members and providers, is an accessible, convenient and easy-to-use PROVIDER REGISTRY that allows members access to the contact details of healthcare providers willing to see GEMS members at agreed rates without any additional surcharges.

By simply sending an SMS to 33489, Friends of GEMS empowers members to locate a healthcare provider in the specific discipline and location of their choice. Members SMS their membership number, the discipline or service they require (e.g.: 'GP', 'Dentist' or 'Pharmacy') and their preferred location to receive an immediate reply stating the up-to-date contact details and addresses of at least three Friends of GEMS in the area they require.

The benefits of joining Friends of GEMS include:

- direct access to a large and rapidly growing membership base;
- a listing on the busy GEMS website which receives more than 200 000 hits each month;
- active promotion and marketing of the programme by GEMS to all of its members; and Friends of GEMS receive useful practice and demographic information on a regular basis.

Joining is easy and by meeting the following criteria, you can start reaping the benefits immediately:

- Providers must be fully registered with the appropriate professional body

- Commit to charging members the GEMS rate (on the Ruby, Emerald and Onyx options) and the Prime Cure rate (on the Sapphire and Beryl options)
- Commit not to charge GEMS members any surcharges
- Sign a short commitment to abide by the participation criteria listed above.

Register NOW!

- Register online by visiting: www.gems.gov.za
- Email enquiries to: friends@gems.gov.za
- Faxes can be forwarded to: 0861 00 4367

Complete the commitment form and submit to GEMS.



Prompt claims payments!

We strive to offer pharmacists the best possible service through efficient processes and useful enhancements.

The first step in achieving this is ensuring the prompt payment of claims. Read on to find out how to ensure timely payment of your claims.

Qualsa Pharmaceutical Benefit Management, together with our business partners and client schemes, has embarked on a project for the purpose of determining how best to introduce efficiencies into the claims transaction process. Where possible it is our intention to effect enhancements, make more information available and reduce the costs associated with unnecessary claims transactions on behalf

of all participating stakeholders, including yourselves.

Correct claim submissions and destinations

The correct submission of claims on your behalf is vitally important and we hereby request that you take reasonable steps to ensure that this is done accurately. Steps include checking identity documents or dates of birth to ensure authenticity of the members who present membership cards. Correct completion of the mandatory fields is also necessary.

These include: member number, surname and dependant code as reflected on the membership card.

Ensuring that claims are sent to the correct destinations will also aid in prompt settlements. For example: GEMS Options **Onyx, Emerald** and **Ruby** claims must be routed to **Qualsa Pharmaceutical Benefit Management** whereas the claims for GEMS Options **Beryl** and **Sapphire** must be routed to **PrimeCure** via **Mediscor**.

Online switch out rejections and reversals

In order to reduce the number of claims rejections or reversals and ultimately pharmacy debt, we ask that you take the following steps:

- Check with members to determine whether the medicine items have been pre-authorized before submission. The member must present a valid script and proof of authorisation.
- Ensure that the claim has been updated with the correct referral doctor as many pharmacies forget to do so.



Qualsa Maximum Price (Generic Reference Pricing)

Procurement of medicines should always be in line with the Qualsa Maximum Price (QMP) so that members are not negatively impacted by co-payments due to choosing medicines that are more expensive than the reference price.

ICD-10 Diagnosis Coding

Please be reminded that claims must reflect the correct ICD-10 diagnosis codes on consultation and prescription claims made on behalf of members. This will not only ensure that claims will be paid timeously, accurately and from the correct benefit categories but also allow accurate identification and routing of claims to the Prescribed Minimum Benefit categories. ■