Is There a Pharmacist in the House?

Eunice Ference, Elderplan’s Manager of Pharmacy Program, first became interested in pharmaceuticals while a freshman in college.

“My roommate’s mother was the pharmacy director for a hospital,” Ference recalls. “After that, I fell in love with the profession.”

Ference’s job puts her in charge of Elderplan’s Part D prescription drug program for Medicare members. As part of her responsibilities, Ference must review and manage Elderplan’s formularies—a list of drugs covered by the managed care plan.

Each quarter, Ference is involved in Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee Meetings (P and T), consisting of Elderplan physicians, pharmacists and nurses. During P and T, the group approves or disapproves new drugs available on the market. The committee also discusses the Utilization Management Program, which includes drug authorizations and therapy, as well as quantity and limit.

“These meetings help us manage which drugs are added to the formulary,” said Ference. “Our committee receives input from sales, nurses and members about what medications should be included on the formulary and what drugs should change.”

Ference also is responsible for the Medication Therapy Management (MTM) program, which is mandated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Each quarter, MTM selects CMS approved criteria members must fall under to be enrolled in the program, including disease diagnosis, number of medications taken and how much drugs cost annually. Once placed in the program, a MTM vendor will analyze each member’s profile to ensure top medication safety. If the vendor finds a care gap, MTM will submit the provider an intervention to change a member’s current drug therapy program.

“For example, let’s say a member is taking two medications for high blood pressure, but doesn’t realize it; we will intervene,” explained Ference. “MTM will send a letter to the provider to correct the situation.”

In 2009, there were a total of 814 Elderplan members who were enrolled in MTM, which started three years ago. MTM also is overseen by Dr. Hany Abdelaal, Elderplan’s Vice President of Medical Affairs; Robert Bennett, Elderplan’s Medical Management Director and Lynda Montella, Assistant Vice President of Medical Management.

“My work at Elderplan is so interesting. It’s different than anything I’ve done before,” said Ference. “I’m the only pharmacist here. Everything I do can have an impact. Just one formulary change can affect all 16,000 members.”

Ference graduated from the University of Illinois with a doctorate of pharmacy.

For more information about Elderplan’s Pharmacy Manager, contact Eunice at (718) 630-2691.