

2021 Month of Advocacy Recap

by Jillian Allen, 2022 PharmD Candidate

In a year unlike any in our lifetime, extending PSW's annual Legislative Day to a month-long virtual conference was only fitting. Advocacy in pharmacy is especially important this year, because pharmacists are on the front line in the fight against COVID-19. Just as we adapted to the pandemic as community members, students, and professionals, we must also adapt to advocating for the pharmacy profession in a new format. It has been an incredibly productive year for pharmacists in Wisconsin, as we have made strides in vaccination efforts, in PBM reform, and as healthcare providers in our communities.

PSW's Month of Advocacy began with a Pharmacy Law Update for 2021. Over the past year, legislation advancing Wisconsin pharmacy practice has made unparalleled strides. Among the highlights is the long-awaited revision of Phar 7, which included simplifying counseling requirements. Additionally, to help the fight against the pandemic, Acts 3 and 42 expanded immunization abilities to pharmacy students and pharmacy technicians across the state. Additionally, among many other accomplishments, the passing of Act 9 brings comprehensive pharmacy benefit manager reform into law. During another update, Pharmacy Examining Board (PEB) members John Weitekamp, Philip Trapskin, and Tiffany O'Hagan reviewed Phar 7 topics, COVID-19 legislative variances, changes to the NAPLEX exam by NABP,

and upcoming projects for the PEB.

In another session, Antonio Ciaccia, the cofounder of 46Brooklyn, presented on pharmacy benefit managers, how to increase drug cost transparency, and how PBMs affect competitive markets. He explained the difference between list prices and the prices patients, pharmacies, and suppliers actually pay for drugs and how this correlates to the viability of our healthcare system. He argued that we operate in a fundamentally broken system with an economic disincentive to spend time with patients. Wisconsin PBM reform is just a first step toward fixing the current system.

In federal legal matters, the Alliance for Pharmacy Compounding's legal counsel, David Pore, elaborated on the FDA's Compounding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and how it might affect pharmacies throughout Wisconsin. Although the deadline to sign the MOU is officially in October 2021, Pore was emphatic that the deadline should be extended and would be extended by current legal proceedings. The MOU puts state legislatures in a compromised position: they must either take on an unfunded administrative burden, or challenge pharmacies that rely on outsourcing their compounded products. In the end, it will be essential for pharmacists in Wisconsin to prepare for this upcoming change in federal policy.

In the state legislative panel, Senators

Patrick Testin and Jon Erpenbach, and Representative Lisa Subeck, elaborated on Wisconsin legislators' priorities. Priorities include expanding access to quality healthcare, improving and continuing an adequate COVID-19 response, expanding Medicaid, and improving access to mental healthcare. The legislators also discussed issues like legalizing marijuana and mask mandates. Concerning the COVID-19 response, legislators seek to enhance the vaccine rollout, increase flexibility for healthcare providers during the pandemic, and prepare for future public health crises in a less partisan manner.

Guest speakers Tom Dilworth, Luke Schulz, Janelle Heinrich, and Karen Timberlake delved into the logistics of Wisconsin's COVID-19 response. Wisconsin is the nation's leader in vaccination rate when taking into account vaccine supply received, which is a tremendous feat. Public health administrators now seek to create predictability for vaccinators with consistent supply, to equalize information flow to citizens, and ensure equity in vaccination through trusted local messengers. Although we are top in the country, seeking an 80% community immunization rate will be a challenge in the coming months and will require pharmacists to lead the way. Guest speakers also discussed how politics influence science and our public health response methods. Most importantly, the COVID-19

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response panel emphasized preparing for the next pandemic, and increasing public health awareness and preparedness, while balancing COVID-19 concerns with other relevant public healthcare concerns.

Overall, PSW has been essential to incorporating pharmacies in the vaccination efforts across Wisconsin. Governor Tony Evers shared his thanks to the pharmacy profession for playing such a critical role in the COVID-19 defense, recognizing the pharmacist's role in testing and vaccinating citizens for COVID-19. Throughout PSW's Month of Advocacy, moderators asked us to reflect upon the past year through the lens of pharmacy. Though we are apart, our shared interest in pharmacy advocacy brings us together. Our voice is stronger as a community. As we face tough challenges ahead, our leadership in the community is a key to advancing our profession and closing the door on the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PSW Good Government Awards are normally announced annually on Legislative Day for pharmacists and students who partake in significant grassroots advocacy, and display growing advocacy skills. Although we could not recognize the recipients of these awards in person, we congratulate the 2021 PSW Good Government Award recipient, Michelle Farrell, owner of Boscobel Pharmacy and Center Pharmacy; and the 2021 PSW Student Good Government Award recipients Antonio Pusateri, Jillian Allen, and Daniel Funk at Concordia, MCW, and UW-Madison, respectively. Finally, if you were unable to attend the PSW Month of Advocacy sessions, they are available to view as recordings via the [PSW webpage](#).

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