

March-April 2019

Volume X

Issue II

Edited by Andrew Cartmell

Vermont News

Board of Pharmacy Meeting

The next Vermont Board of pharmacy meeting will take place on May 22 at 89 Main Street, 3rd Floor · Montpelier, VT 05620-3402

Please check the official [website](#) for updates.



Award Given at VPA Spring CE Meeting

Lynne Vezina, VPA Board Member for fifteen years, received an award to recognize her "dedication to patients, profession, and the Vermont Pharmacists".

The award was given at our Spring 2019 CE Meeting on March 17, 2019 in Burlington.



Congressman Welch Moves to Protect Independent Pharmacies

On April 22, congressman Peter Welch, D-VT, introduced a pair of bills designed to help protect the 41 remaining independent pharmacies left in Vermont from what he described as “anti-competitive practices” of pharmacy benefit managers (PBM).

Pharmacy benefit managers, whose self described mission is to “reduce prescription drug costs and improve convenience and safety for consumers, employers, unions, and government programs,”(1) have recently come under scrutiny as prescription prices continue to rise while small independent pharmacies close, nationally, at an alarming rate.

Said Welch, “I want to maintain the viability of our community pharmacies because of the important role they play in the community (and) the really wonderful service, by and large, they give to the patient “.

The first bill is designed to eliminate retroactive fees, or fees imposed on a prescription after it has been sold to the customer. For example, Rutland Independent Pharmacy Director Jeffrey Hochberg was billed \$60,000 in retroactive fees. Said Hochberg, the bill was labeled as “direct indirect remuneration” (DIR) and “have very little transparency to them.”

There is currently no appeal process for DIR fees.

The second bill would prohibit PBMs from excluding independent pharmacies from being part of the Medicare preferred pharmacy network. Said Welch, “That

Part D market is huge, and if our local pharmacists are not even allowed to participate in it, they have no chance.” Welch described Vermont’s independent pharmacies as “under siege by practices that make it almost impossible for them to be economically viable.”

The bills have nine cosponsors and have bipartisan support.

For more in depth information on this issue read this Vermont Digger article [here](#)

And Congressman Welch’s press release [here](#)

1. <https://www.pcmagnet.org/our-industry/>

National News

PBM Business Practices Ravage Illinois Independent Pharmacies

More than a dozen pharmacies across the state of Illinois have closed since 2018. The reason, given by third-generation independent pharmacist, Owen Sullivan, was the recent Medicaid expansion that was designed to save the state money, that instead shifted payments away from independent pharmacies and into the pockets of pharmacy benefit managers (PBM).

PBM’s are supposed to negotiate the price of medications with drug companies on behalf of insurers and employers. However, one of the methods they employ to do this, called “spread pricing” – where they charge more for the medications than they pay the pharmacies, can lead to pharmacies being underpaid. This is especially hard for small independent pharmacies without the financial resources of the large chains.

PBM’s that engage in this practice have already been frozen out in some states, such as Ohio and West Virginia.

Illinois, recognizing this issue, created a program last year to help fund struggling independent pharmacies, but as pharmacies continue to close, it is becoming evident that a long term solution needs to be found.

Rep. Greg Harris, D-Chicago has introduced a bill to eliminate spread pricing, replacing it with a flat fee, and also requiring more transparency from PBMs.

Read more about this important issue [here](#)

New York State Pharmacists Stand Up to PBM's

In March, hundreds of neighborhood pharmacy owners from all over New York State met in the capital city of Albany to ask state lawmakers to enact legislation requiring transparency from pharmacy benefit managers (PBM).

This rally was organized by FixRx, a joint effort of both the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York (PSSNY) and the New York City Pharmacists Society (NYCPS), in an attempt to fix issues created by the current PBM system.

Elizabeth Lake, executive director of PSSNY, said, "Prescription drug middlemen are rigging prices, eliminating patient choice, ripping off taxpayers and destroying neighborhood pharmacies. We urge our elected representatives in Albany to act now by introducing common sense regulations to protect patients, taxpayers and neighborhood pharmacies."

FixRx has also created a website, fixrx.org to help explain PBM's role in why the current prescription drug distribution system is so broken.

To read more in this important issue check out Chain Drug Review's [article](#)

Or visit fixrx.org for more information

Contact

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You can reach us here at: vpanewseditor@gmail.com

Stories Shared on the VPA Facebook

These stories were shared on the VPA Facebook page in March and April. Give our [Facebook page](#) a like to stay up to date!

[Pharmacy adds drug disposal box](#)

[The Giants at the Heart of the Opioid Crisis](#)

[China Bans All Types of Fentanyl, Cutting Supply of Deadly Drug to U.S. and Fulfilling Pledge to Trump](#)

[At 71, She's Never Felt Pain or Anxiety. Now Scientists Know Why](#)

[Vermont AG files lawsuit against opioid distributors](#)

2020 Ballot March 17, 2019

Nominations

Chairman of the Board (Honorary) James Godfrey

President Sandra Rosa

1st Vice President Lauren Bode

2nd Vice President Amy Yanicak

Treasurer Caroline Kirkpatrick

Secretary Katelyn Trucott

Nominations for the 2020 ballot from our Spring Meeting. Write-in candidates are allowed. Active Members will vote at the Fall Meeting (TBA).

Newly elected officers shall assume their duties January 1st following the Fall meeting. All elected Officers serve a one-year term.

On behalf of the Nominations Committee,
Marty Irons, Chair Lynne Vezina Denise Clark

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