News Release
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Harps Food, UAMS Create Program to Teach Pharmacists to Work More Directly with Patients

LITTLE ROCK — Springdale-based Harps Food Stores Inc. and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) College of Pharmacy together have created a novel training program to teach pharmacists to work more directly with patients to improve their health.

Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians will be trained to work as a team on medication therapy management (MTM), which is medical care provided by pharmacists to ensure medications are helping patients achieve the best possible health from their prescriptions.

The program is called MTM The Future Today (mtmthefuturetoday.com) and could bring significant changes to the pharmacy profession, said College of Pharmacy Dean Keith Olsen, Pharm. D.

Olsen and Duane Jones, Harps pharmacy district manager, formalized the alliance in October to create the program, which includes training for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

MTM can include reviewing a patient’s medications to make sure there are no unintended interactions and advising patients on any problems they are having with medications. Pharmacists also can instruct patients on taking medications on schedule and give vaccinations.

Nikki Scott, Pharm. D., was completing a pharmacy residency with Harps in 2015 and took on the project of creating a step-by-step protocol and training program to teach pharmacists and pharmacy technicians how to implement MTM services within the daily work and bustle of a community pharmacy.

After her residency, Scott began working for Harps and developed the program into what became MTM The Future Today. It shifts all non-clinical duties to pharmacy technicians.
Patients Benefit from New Pharmacy Program

so pharmacists can turn their attention to patient-centered activities like medication
reviews and management, taking the time to provide advice to patients about their drug
therapy.

Scott and Jones in October 2015 trained 63 Harps pharmacists and 34 Harps pharmacy
technicians how to put MTM into practice using MTM The Future Today.

In the first 10 months of 2015, Harps pharmacists completed 35 medication reviews with
patients. In the last two months of 2015, after the training program, they completed 260.
The program boosted it to eighth place in the first quarter of 2016 in a national ranking
of regional chains for CMR completion rates. In the second quarter Harps moved up to
fifth place. Before the MTM program Harps pharmacies were not even placed in the top
50.

The training program impressed Nicki Hilliard, Pharm. D., professor in the College of
Pharmacy Department of Pharmacy Practice, and she brought it to the attention of Olsen,
who joined with Harp’s so the college could help promote the innovative program and
evaluate its success.

“Nikki Scott at Harps will be training the trainers and expanding the program, so the
program can go nationwide,” Olsen said. “The program improves patient care and
increases revenues. Many pharmacists know about medication therapy management but
they don’t know how to incorporate it into a busy work flow. This really provides a way
to do that.”

Medicare Part D reimburses pharmacies for completing more medication reviews in
MTM. Doing more reviews will help ensure that reimbursement continues and could
convince private insurers of MTM’s advantages as health outcomes improve and costs
drop, Jones said.

“We hopefully can change the practice so patients get the expertise a pharmacist can
provide and help them with their care,” Hilliard said. “It can be a game changer. Most
pharmacists got into the profession to help people, and this is just a tool to deliver that
care.”

Hilliard also is president-elect of the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), and has
experience marketing a national training program. She plans to use her experience and
connections to help expand the program throughout the country. In mid September, Scott
trained 25 Ohio pharmacists and 25 technicians.

UAMS is the state’s only comprehensive academic health center, with colleges of
Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school;
a hospital; a northwest Arkansas regional campus; a statewide network of regional
centers; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, the Jackson
T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, the Myeloma Institute, the Harvey &
Bernice Jones Eye Institute, the Psychiatric Research Institute, the Donald W. Reynolds
Institute on Aging and the Translational Research Institute. It is the only adult Level 1
trauma center in the state. UAMS has 2,870 students, 799 medical residents and five
dental residents. It is the state’s largest public employer with more than 10,000
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employees, including about 1,000 physicians and other professionals who provide care to patients at UAMS, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, the VA Medical Center and UAMS regional centers throughout the state. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or Instagram.

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