

NACDS Pharmacy & Technology Conference: Education, Exhibits and Networking

The 2010 NACDS Pharmacy & Technology Conference was a power-packed event filled with educational programs, exhibits and networking during the course of 3 days from August 28-31, in ever-popular San Diego, CA. Hy-Vee Inc. Vice President, Pharmacy and 2010 National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) Pharmacy & Technology Conference Chairman Robert Egeland, RPh kicked off the Conference urging all attendees to “look at what you learn from this Conference through the eyes of at least one other person in your company, and then share it with them.” He emphasized that addressing customers’ health and wellness needs requires cross-department collaboration within companies. He also noted the value of the information provided during the program as a “measure of where the industry is, where it is going, and what that means for your company,” and highlighted opportunities for individuals to benefit from mentoring relationships with industry colleagues.

Larry Merlo, president and chief operating officer of CVS Caremark, and NACDS Chairman of the Board followed, describing his perspective on the state of pharmacy. He likened the path of pharmacy and healthcare reform to a journey, rather than a destination. “If we agree that expansion of access through healthcare reform makes sense, we need to begin the work on the cost and quality side of the equation. Pharmacy has the opportunity to be a key contributor to lowering healthcare costs over the long term,” he said. Merlo said such measures include immunizations and medication therapy management (MTM) services, e-prescribing, pharmacogenomics and collaborative practice agreements. Merlo concluded by presenting the future vision of customer service – which he said “has always been the primary driver of success in our industry. Service will be defined by how influential our pharmacies have become in shifting patient behavior in ways that improve the health outcomes of our patients, and lower the cost of healthcare for our society.”

Former White House Press Secretary and political commentator Dana Perino followed with her perspectives on current issues and future trends in politics. Subsequent general business program speakers included Doug Long, vice president of industry relations, IMS HEALTH, Steven C. Anderson, NACDS president and chief executive officer, and David Cutler, Ph.D., Otto Eckstein Professor of Applied Economics, Harvard University and senior healthcare advisor to President Obama’s Presidential campaign.

In his “State of the Association” remarks, Anderson described the current environment as a time of pharmacy renaissance. “This renaissance refers to advancements of NACDS members in patient care. It also refers to recognition of this work by policymakers, opinion leaders, the media, and other healthcare providers,” Anderson said. The expanding role of pharmacy as a major healthcare provider was exhibited by contrasting pharmacy’s positioning in the new healthcare reform law and its positioning in a report authored by Abraham Flexner in 1910. Anderson used this contrast to point of several NACDS achievements. In addition to advances for pharmacy in health reform, NACDS’ continuing areas of focus are state budget issues; highlighting the role of pharmacy through the media, and increasing the engagement of pharmacy personnel in public policy and political involvement through the NACDS RxIMPACT grassroots advocacy program. RxIMPACT Votes, is a bipartisan get-out-the-vote campaign to

encourage pharmacy personnel to register to vote, to volunteer for political campaigns, and to vote on election day – all for the candidates of their individual choices.

Doug Long's market outlook followed with themes of moderate market growth, influenced by brand drug product price increases, less generic product price deflation and increased generic volume, seasonal sales related to the H1N1 flu, fewer FDA safety-related events, and new, innovative therapies. On the down side, market growth will slow based on lower brand product volume, patent expirations, slower uptake of new products, greater generic substitution and stakeholder reaction to the economy. Long noted 2009 saw a 5.2% sales growth, while growth through June 2010 stood at 4.2%. Prescription growth through June was 2.0% compared to 2.1% for 2009. Long went on to describe US drug sales by market segment, generic/brand/specialty product performance and OTC sales trends. He concluded with several key trends that will impact the market going forward, including:

- A rise in the share of the health care budget for pharmaceutical products
- Accelerated uptake of health information technology
- Increased patient compliance/persistence
- Expanded access to health care
- Increased diagnosis of asymptomatic conditions
- Greater clinical efficacy of new products and emerging therapeutic platforms, and
- An aging population.

Long predicted market growth would range from 3% to 6% annually through 2014 with a rise of 1% to 2% in prescriptions.

Focused, educational sessions followed each morning's business program and included topics on fraud/abuse, regulatory updates from DEA to HIPAA, personalized medicine, corporate leadership communication, improving medication adherence and patient safety, e-prescribing and health care reform.

Afternoons were spent in one-on-one business meetings and perusing various products and services offered by more than 275 exhibiting companies. Lunches were held in the exhibit hall and further networking opportunities for the more than 1,500 participants included the opening reception and closing banquet featuring REO Speedwagon. The banquet also highlighted industry member contributions.

Joe Conda, Senior Vice President of Strategic Planning for H.D. Smith was honored with NACDS' Harold W. Pratt award, recognizing his activities that have contributed to the promotion, recognition and improvement of the practice of pharmacy within the chain drug industry. "We are pleased to honor Joe's 40 years of dedicated service to the pharmacy industry by bestowing upon him the Harold W. Pratt Award," said NACDS President and CEO Steve Anderson. "Joe has spent his time building relationships and building strategy. He has forged relationships among many groups that benefited not only his company, but also the industry. He has helped shape pharmacy into what it has become today, and helped to create the momentum that will continue to enhance pharmacy's role in healthcare delivery." Prior to joining H. D. Smith, Conda served as an executive consultant with pharmaceutical, consumer packaging and medical technology companies. Previously, he served as president of Owens Illinois Healthcare

Packaging serving in almost all key operational and executive leadership roles. He also served in sales and marketing executive capacities at Brockway.

Mark your calendars for the 2011 NACDS Pharmacy & Technology Conference that will be held August 27-30, in Boston, MA. See www.nacds.org for more information.

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