



Sample Meds

I'm finding that there is a significantly higher percentage of RHCs that I evaluate that no longer offer samples to their patients. This is due to several factors. The remote location of many RHCs creates a challenge for drug reps to travel to, so many of these don't have very many samples even given to them. With so few available it makes a lot of sense to simply not offer them at all, rather than keep up with the logging in and out. This log, based on most state pharmacy board regulations, requires both the INCOMING and OUTGOING meds to be logged, including the patient name, drug name, dosage, lot number and prescribing provider. Just saying "sample given" in the EMR or chart is NOT a log, so this is an extra step for the provider, since again, in most states, ONLY the Medical Provider can dispense these samples (actually go to the sample closet, pull them, log them and hand them to the patient).

While some EMR systems can accomplish this task in the software, it is often an expensive "pharmacy" add-on and is cost prohibitive. In addition, you don't get the \$4 sample to give out.....samples are provided for the latest and "greatest" drugs, ones often heavily advertised in the media. While this can be a good thing for patients, especially if you are wanting to try a patient on a new drug to see if it works, check for side effects, etc. without the patient having to purchase a possibly expensive med, it can also be very frustrating for the patient to get this sample, like the results, and then REALLY DISLIKE how expensive it is when they have to actually purchase it themselves at the pharmacy.

NOT having samples also means less for the staff to do in checking these meds for expiration dates, rotating stock, etc.

The decision to offer samples or not is totally up to the administration and medical providers in the RHC.

However, if you DO offer samples, most states require you to log them in and out. If you choose to ignore this regulatory requirement in your state, the surveyor will cite you, and possibly report you to the pharmacy board for further action on their part. You may not pass the re-cert inspection, and you WON'T pass the initial survey without having to file a corrective plan of action, etc. While vouchers can be a good substitute, you have to be careful to make sure your local pharmacy participates in the specific voucher program you offer, AND that the voucher you give out hasn't expired.

Jim Estes, President

Healthcare Horizons

www.ruralhealthclinicconsultant.com