Benefits Advisory Committee (BAC)
April 14, 2022
Minutes of the Meeting

[**In these minutes:** Acknowledgement of the Passing of Former BAC Members; Employee Benefits Update; Fairview Specialty Pharmacy Plan Review; 2021-22 Employee Comments - Fairview Specialty]

PRESENT: Dale Swanson (chair), Amy Monahan (vice chair), Lynn Blewett, Nikos Papanikolopoulos, Pervin Shroff, Christine Bakke, Shannon Farrell, Cynthia Murdoch, Kerry Witherell, Kim Little, Carmen Sims, Jean Otto, Terri Wallace, Nancy Fulton, Kenneth Horstman, Greg Thurston, Susan Kratz, Jakub Tolar, Mary Rohman Kuhl, Deb Pavlica, Mary Blissenbach, Steff Yorek

REGRETS: None

ABSENT: Jennifer Schultz, Christine O'Connor

GUESTS: Kal Soundara, account manager, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy; Mel Nelson, regional operations manager, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy; Ross Otto, director of payer relations, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy; Ann McNamara, director of clinical development, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy; Kari Amundson, vice president for specialty pharmacy development, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy

OTHERS: Karen Chapin, Ryan Reisdorfer, Katie Kolodge, Laura Manydeeds, Linda Blake, Karen Wallin, Lauren Daughenbaugh, Curt Swenson, Libby Stille, Deanne Nelson

Chair Dale Swanson welcomed the committee and members introduced themselves.

1. Acknowledgement of the Passing of Former BAC Members - Swanson informed the committee that two former members of the BAC recently passed away:

- Tina Falkner - Member 2005-2011; Chair 2012-2020
    - Director of Student Finance, Academic Support Resources
    - Video Tribute from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)
- Amos Deinard - Member 2004-2020
    - Adjunct Associate Professor, Division of Epidemiology and Community Health
    - Star Tribune Obituary

Swanson recognized both Falkner and Deinard for their years of service and as two wonderful people to have as colleagues. Jakub Tolar, Ken Horstman, and Karen Chapin also shared memories, thoughts, and acknowledgments of the accomplishments and service of Falkner and Deinard.

2. Employee Benefits Update - Mary Rohman Kuhl, senior director of total rewards, Office of Human Resources (OHR), provided an update from Employee Benefits, and highlights were as follows:

- A request for proposal (RFP) has been issued for the employee assistance program (EAP) vendor. The RFP was sent out on March 23 with proposals due by April 20. She added that Linda Blake will be the main point of contact on the RFP and Terri Wallace has agreed to serve on the RFP committee on behalf of the BAC.
- OHR is seeing excellent engagement with its monthly newsletter. The upcoming May newsletter will have an emphasis on mental health and accessing the EAP.

3. Fairview Specialty Pharmacy Plan Review - Swanson introduced the following representatives from Fairview Specialty Pharmacy who provided an update and review of the University's specialty pharmacy program:

- Kal Soundara, account manager, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy
- Mel Nelson, regional operations manager, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy
- Ross Otto, director of payer relations, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy
- Ann McNamara, director of clinical development, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy
- Kari Amundson, vice president for specialty pharmacy development, Fairview Specialty Pharmacy

Soundara presented a slide deck and highlights were as follows:

- Specialty pharmacies are needed for medications that often include a more complex version of therapy that are usually more complicated, expensive, and can have varying side effects. Conditions that require more specialty drugs can include multiple sclerosis, hepatitis C, and rheumatoid arthritis.
- One of the main ways to try and drive down costs is to convert specialty patients to generic or biosimilar drugs when possible. Generic drugs are exact copies of brand products with no differences between the two. Biosimilar products are biological products that are highly similar (but not the exact copy) of an FDA-approved brand drug.
- Overall, customers are quite satisfied with the services offered by Fairview, and Fairview has had industry-leading Net Promoter scores in the specialty industry.
- Fairview has introduced its Relay Network, a HIPAA-compliant mobile communication platform and web portal which offers online ordering, refill reminders and other notifications, and has a two-way chat function for better customer service.
- Fairview has its Therapy Management service incorporated into the University's Wellbeing Program. Eighty-three individuals participated in this program over the past year, which connects clients with clinicians who can help manage specialty medications.
- Specialty pharmacies are important due to the fact that specialty drugs represent a small portion of the pharmaceutical industry, but account for a large percent of total pharmaceutical spending. In 2021, specialty pharmaceuticals represented 52-53% of all drug expenditures for only 2% of the population.
- There has been a sharp increase in utilization by patients with inflammatory diseases. Humira is one of the most common expensive drugs driving those cost trends. Treatments

for pulmonary conditions like atopic dermatitis and asthma have also increased over the last year.
- The more generic alternatives there are to a particular drug, the lower the average price of those generics will be. The UPlan has experienced some drops in the price of high-cost drugs due to generics, such as Tecfidera which treats multiple sclerosis.
- Fairview further gave an overview of the landscape of treatments and options for treating atopic dermatitis.

Lynn Blewett asked how many University employees are on the specialty drugs and if those who responded to the BAC survey have unique characteristics. Otto replied that he did not have that information on hand but due to the fact that the results are anonymous, they do not have more specific data. Ryan Reisdorfer added that typically 2% or less of the population utilize specialty drugs.

Swanson asked if the increase in patients utilizing specialty drugs for inflammatory diseases were because of new patients or people switching drugs. Otto replied that a majority are new users utilizing these medicines.

Blewett asked if the national statistics about specialty pharmaceuticals representing 52-53% of all drug expenditures for only 2% of the population also applied to the University's population. Reisdorfer indicated that was true. Kim Little thanked the representatives and noted that coverage of many of these drugs makes a huge difference in people's lives.

4. 2021-22 Employee Comments - Fairview Specialty - Cynthia Murdoch then presented the results of the BAC employee survey as it pertains to Fairview Specialty Pharmacy. Murdoch shared a handout summarizing the results, stating that there were 141 total responses and an overall 70% positivity rate. Of those comments, the most common opinions were that customer service was great and they felt lucky to have access to a specialty pharmacy for life-altering medicine such as chemotherapy. Of those comments that were negative in nature, people had concerns about inaccurate or confusing communications, especially when treatments were needed in a timely manner.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Chris Kwapick
University Senate Office