Antimicrobial Stewardship in Ambulatory Health Care

Effective January 1, 2020, new antimicrobial stewardship requirements will be applicable to Joint Commission-accredited ambulatory health care organizations that routinely prescribe antimicrobial medications. These include organizations providing medical or dental services, episodic care, occupational/worksite health, urgent/immediate care, or convenient care. The requirements are not applicable to ambulatory surgery centers or the office-based surgery program.

This project is a continuation of The Joint Commission’s initiative to promote antimicrobial stewardship in the hospital, critical access hospital, and nursing care center programs (see R3 Report Issue 8, October 19, 2016).

The inappropriate use of antimicrobial medications contributes to antibiotic resistance and adverse drug events, and improving antimicrobial prescribing practices is a patient safety priority. As a result, The Joint Commission has developed a new standard in the Medication Management (MM) chapter (Standard MM.09.01.03) with 5 new elements of performance (EPs) addressing antimicrobial stewardship in the ambulatory setting.

The new EPs align with current recommendations from scientific and professional organizations and address the following concepts:

- Identifying an antimicrobial stewardship leader.
- Establishing an annual antimicrobial stewardship goal.
- Implementing evidence-based practice guidelines related to the antimicrobial stewardship goal.
- Providing clinical staff with educational resources related to the antimicrobial stewardship goal.
- Collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to the antimicrobial stewardship goal.

Engagement with stakeholders, customers, and experts

In addition to an extensive literature review and public field review, The Joint Commission obtained expert guidance from the following groups:

- Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) of subject matter experts from various health care and academic organizations and professional associations.
- Standards Review Panel (SRP) comprised of clinicians and administrators who provided a “boots on the ground” point of view and insights into the practical application of the proposed standards.

The prepublication version of the antimicrobial stewardship requirements will be available online until the end of December 2019. On or after January 1, 2020, please access the new requirements in the E-dition.
Standard MM.09.01.03: Antimicrobial stewardship is identified as an organizational priority.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>EP 1: The organization identifies an individual(s) responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring activities to promote appropriate antimicrobial medication prescribing practices.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>Antimicrobial resistance is growing, so improving the use of antimicrobial medications across the care continuum is a patient safety priority. Identifying an individual(s) to be accountable for an organization’s antimicrobial stewardship activities increases the likelihood of success by establishing clear lines of accountability. Identifying an individual(s) for this role also demonstrates an organizational commitment to improving the use of antimicrobial medications. Antimicrobial stewardship activities may be the individual(s) primary job responsibility or may be in addition to other duties.</td>
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| Requirement | EP 2: The organization sets at least one annual antimicrobial stewardship goal.  
Note: Examples of antimicrobial stewardship goals may include decreasing the use of antibiotics to treat viral infections or addressing overuse of a specific medication. |
| Rationale   | Establishing an annual antimicrobial stewardship goal allows the organization to focus its efforts on a specific opportunity to improve antimicrobial prescribing practices. Organizations may consider reviewing their prescribing practices or consulting available national data to identify areas of inappropriate antimicrobial medication use. The organization’s protocols and guidelines, education resources, and measurement activities should align with the annual goal. |
| Requirement | EP 3: The organization uses evidence-based practice guidelines related to its annual antimicrobial stewardship goal(s).  
Note: Guidelines may include diagnostic criteria and treatment recommendations to use when prescribing antimicrobial medications. |

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| **Rationale** | It is important for organizations to implement evidence-based practice guidelines or to develop protocols to improve the appropriateness of their antimicrobial prescribing. Using protocols and guidelines will help ensure that patients who need antibiotics receive them while those without an indication do not. |
| **Requirement** | EP 4: The organization provides all clinical staff and licensed independent practitioners with educational resources related to its antimicrobial stewardship goal(s) and strategies that promote appropriate antimicrobial medication prescribing practices. |
| **Rationale** | Clinical staff need to be educated about the organization’s annual antimicrobial stewardship goal so that patients receive clear, consistent recommendations when antimicrobials are not indicated. Educational resources may include recommended prescribing practices (including medication selection, dosing, or duration) and strategies and interventions to explain why some patients may not need an antibiotic, such as addressing patient expectations and discussing possible adverse effects of antibiotics. |
| **Requirement** | EP 5: The organization collects, analyzes, and reports data pertaining to the antimicrobial stewardship goal(s) to organizational leadership and prescribers. (See also PI.03.01.01, EP 4)  
*Note: Data may include antimicrobial medication prescribing patterns, antimicrobial resistance patterns, or an evaluation of the antimicrobial stewardship activities implemented.* |
| **Rationale** | It is important to evaluate whether an organization’s antimicrobial stewardship activities are successful and to share with leadership any progress toward achieving the antimicrobial stewardship goal. Organizations may incorporate electronic or manual data collection and analysis methods to identify improvements, though a sustained effort is often required before organizations see change in the culture of antimicrobial prescribing. |
| **Reference** | Cunha CB and D’Agata EMC. Implementing an antimicrobial stewardship program in outpatient dialysis units. *Current Opinions in Nephrology and Hypertension.* 2016;25(6):551-555. doi: https://doi.org/10.1097/MNH.0000000000000281  

*Not a complete literature review.*