The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on all supply chains and manufacturing throughout 2020 and into 2021. Felt broadly across both the acute and post-acute healthcare continuum, pharmacies of all types were impacted by the disruption to supply chains.

Contributing factors resulting in scarcity of critical items included increased demand, hoarding behaviors resulting from panic, depleted inventories, global disruption, and overdependence on imported materials. Although not unique to the post-acute care space, the disruption of the supply chain in turn led to widespread pharmacy shortages of environmental service supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE). Specifically, sanitizers (both hand and surface), cleaning products, masks (cloth, N95, KN95, procedural, and surgical), face shields, goggles, gloves, gowns, thermometers, and air filtration equipment became difficult, if not impossible to source from suppliers. These supply shortages threatened to put patients and healthcare providers at greater risk while caring for patients throughout the pandemic. In addition, the PPE requirement for sterility and the need to maintain supplies within the pharmacy cleanroom were also severely stretched during the pandemic.

Beyond the supply chain issues impacting normal and safe pharmacy operations, decisions for COVID-19 testing and pharmacy’s new role as a key testing provider were often tasked with ensuring they had the appropriate equipment and supplies on hand. Such items included dry ice, cold chain packaging, ultra cold freezers, ultra cold temperature monitoring devices, partitions and dividers if necessary to reconfigure pharmacy space to enable new workflows, and low dead space needles and syringes to minimize vaccine wastage. All of these critical shortages left pharmacies scrambling with very few options for procurement and to meet the needs of patients and healthcare providers.

As the pandemic continues, the needs of healthcare providers and pharmacies are constantly evolving. MHA convenes regular advisory boards and utilizes field intelligence to make certain procurement and contracting efforts remain relevant and useful.

MHA’s medical products and services contracting department assisted member pharmacies in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic across the post-acute care continuum by accessing additional contracted items and suppliers for environmental service supplies, PPE, COVID-19 testing, and critical items to support the COVID-19 vaccination response.

For additional information, contact

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CONCLUSION CONTINUED

The 4 Key Reasons the U.S. Is So Behind on Coronavirus Testing. Available at

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CONCLUSION CONTINUED

Existing partners also shifted manufacturing lines to help supplement product shortages and ensure pharmacy access. Additionally, new companies were emerging and constantly in contact with MHA to provide samples and express interest in contracting opportunities for pharmacy members. Working in parallel with these various approaches, MHA’s medical products and services team in collaboration with MHA’s clinical team ensured newly contracted products were vetted and of quality in order to meet the needs of pharmacies during the pandemic.

As the pandemic continues, the needs of healthcare providers and pharmacies are constantly evolving. MHA convenes regular advisory boards and utilizes field intelligence to make certain procurement and contracting efforts remain relevant and useful.

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METHODS

A retrospective analysis of actions taken by MHA to secure member pharmacy access to critical PPE, supplies, and equipment sourced from both new and existing business partners and manufacturers was conducted from March 2020 through May 2021.

CONCLUSION

Useful to rely on access to crucial pharmacy supplies via traditional distributors and manufacturers for pharmacy members, a unique approach in identifying opportunities and contracts was needed. MHA in turn strengthened its relationships with regional distributors who were able to successfully source high quality products at competitive pricing and sufficient volume.

RESULTS CONTINUED

As of May 1, 2021, MHA’s medical products and services team had contracted with seven new suppliers expanded existing agreements with two suppliers, and strengthened existing relationships with 57 manufacturers and suppliers to ensure member pharmacies had both access to and sufficient volume of necessary PPE, environmental supplies, COVID-19 testing equipment, and vaccine administration supplies.

CONCLUSION

Existing partners also shifted manufacturing lines to help supplement product shortages and ensure pharmacy access. Additionally, new companies were emerging and constantly in contact with MHA to provide samples and express interest in contracting opportunities for pharmacy members. Working in parallel with these various approaches, MHA’s medical products and services team in collaboration with MHA’s clinical team ensured newly contracted products were vetted and of quality in order to meet the needs of pharmacies during the pandemic.

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