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By Rebecca Shanahan

The amount of disruption — both positive and negative — that has taken place in health care over the past decade has been unprecedented. It’s an ex- aggeration to say that the only constant in the health care in- dustry is change. A dynamic regulatory environ- ment, along with other factors like new technology, will already enable new models of care delivery, greater integra- tion, and alternative business models. The special- ty pharmacy industry is no different. However, most experts expect that 2017 will be no different in that respect. Small and large entities will continue to reshape health care in the next 12 months, including the transfer of power in the political arena. The specialty pharmacy in- dustry is not immune to these changes and will likely feel repercussions both directly and indirectly.

As an association represent- ing hundreds of specialty pharmacies and thousands of stakeholders across the nation, NASP has a broad perspective of not just the specialty phar- macy niche but the industry as a whole. Based on this knowl- edge, below are a few of the key drivers that we believe will transform the specialty pharmacy space next year.

Affordable Care Act’s uncertain future

Perhaps the biggest issue on the mind of everyone in the health care industry is what is going to happen to the Affordable Care Act — and, equally important, how quickly it will happen. The impact of any changes to this legislation will be significant for all health care entities, but especially for insur- ers. Any move to eliminate or alter ACA provisions could have a significant impact on their bottom line. For example, if insurance subsidies are eliminated, most insurers — many of whom are already leaving ACA insurance exchanges — will likely exit the individual market altogether. Quite a few experts believe that this scenario is not only likely, it will also happen early in 2017, perhaps in the first quarter.

While insurers anxiously await potential changes to health reform, specialty phar- macies should also be contem- plating the downstream im- pact of these changes on their business models. The ACA has significantly increased the number of individuals with preexisting conditions who require costly drug interventions, an area which directly revenue within the specialty pharmacy space.

During 2017, this market growth will continue. Perhaps the biggest issue on the minds of specialty pharmacies is whether ACA subsidies are eliminated, most insurers will be forced to reframe health care in the next 12 months, including the transfer of power in the political arena. The specialty pharmacy in- dustry is not immune to these changes and will likely feel repercussions both directly and indirectly.

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While 2017 will undoubtedly bring changes to the foun- dational aspects of the ACA, certain strategies enabled by health care reform will prob- ably stay in place regardless of what happens in Washington. Specifically, health care orga- nizations will continue to look for ways to meet the ACA’s triple aim — improving quality, reducing costs and increasing patient satisfaction. Payers and provid- ers have invested substantial time and effort in value-based care and quality improvement programs, and they have also invested direct costs in areas such as new technologies.

As a result, specialty pharma- cies should continue to look for ways to provide value within these new models, whether that means collecting and analyzing quality data or em- ploying clinical best practices that are consistent with these measures.

One other potential issue on legislative front

Although most of the conver- sation around legislation right now is centered on the ACA, and for good reason, there are other new measures on the ho-