



The “Adverse Events Specialist” Role

Providing On-Demand Adverse Event Support to Clinical Staff

An Amplity Health Article

APRIL | 2021



It's one thing to get a patient to start specialty therapy; it's another thing to keep them on that therapy. Adherence often suffers when patients experience unanticipated or bothersome adverse events. This article introduces the reality that, for many specialty brands, partnering traditional field sales representatives with an adverse events specialist can be a key step toward maintaining high adherence rates and achieving clinical success.

Introduction

Specialty drugs, used to treat complex conditions, may cost from \$10,000 to \$100,000 or even more per therapy course. Growth in the use of specialty drugs continues to outpace the overall drug market. As reported by the [Drug Channels Institute 2020 Report](#), specialty drugs now account for 36% of total pharmacy revenue, a new high. Some of the top specialty therapy classes in terms of spending per member per year include rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and cancer.

Unfortunately, even though they are often prescribed to treat debilitating or even fatal diseases, adherence rates for self-administered specialty drugs are often as distressingly low as those of their non-specialty counterparts. For example, adherence rates for patients with breast cancer reportedly range from [15%-87%, with a mean of just 50%](#). For oral cancer meds, nonadherence may be affecting [30%-80% of patients](#). Of course, poor adherence to specialty medications such as oral oncolytics can lead to disease progression and even death.

Working to Improve Specialty-Drug Adherence



As biopharma manufacturers push to reverse these poor specialty adherence rates, we see a movement to deploy specialized clinical teams that work with prescribers and office teams to overcome some of the most likely reasons for nonadherence, including access, cost, and adverse events. For example, to support providers and patients dealing with specialty-drug access and cost issues, many manufacturers deploy [Field Reimbursement Managers](#).

But supporting key stakeholders as they work through adverse events issues has turned out to be a more nuanced challenge. It's easy to assume that helping manage specialty drug adverse events (AEs) is a task that can be readily taken on by one or more of the team members already deployed, such as sales representatives. But the sales team has limited time with prescribers and uses it to discuss the mechanism of action, efficacy rates, dosing and administration, competitive positioning, etc., leaving little time to go beyond a brief mention of expected AEs. What's more, the sales team is unlikely to interact at length to support nurses in identifying and managing AEs to optimize patient adherence.

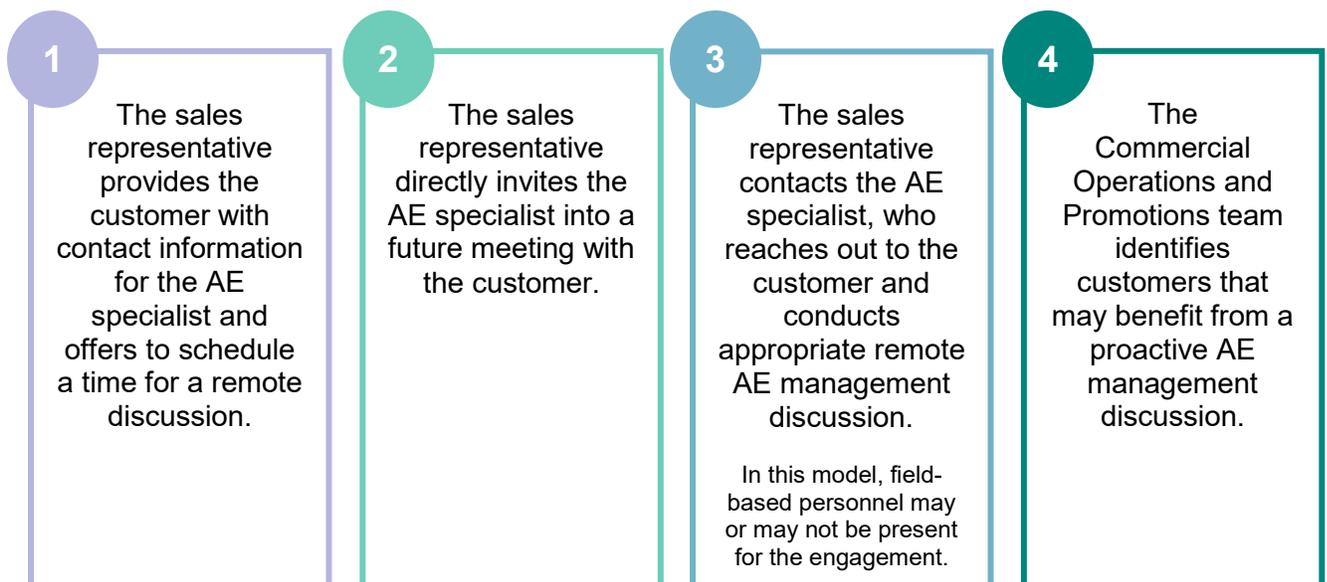
Introducing “Adverse Events Specialists”

To fill this gap, Amplity has begun deploying AE-focused specialists that are available on-demand to walk side-by-side with staff nurses as patients encounter adverse events that threaten to derail therapy. These professionals can have various titles, including clinical support specialist, therapy support specialist, etc. For our discussion, we’ll refer to these experts simply as “adverse events specialists.” AE specialists typically serve in a remote role, although they can provide in-person interaction in some cases. Roughly 60% of AE specialists’ engagements are with nursing staff, but they can also interact with NPs/PAs (13%), pharmacists (11%), medical assistants (10%), and physicians (5%). Primary responsibilities include:

- Educate nurses and allied healthcare professionals on AE expectations and successful AE management techniques based on clinical trials
- Provide support to nurses in identifying and managing AEs to optimize patient adherence
- Share the benefits of proactive discussion to avoid consequences of non-compliance or discontinuation, supported by clinical studies
- Engage remotely with customers using the phone and web conferencing software
- Collaborate with local representative teams to identify and execute on opportunities for customer engagement around AE management



In most cases, AE specialists are partnered with specific sales representatives with whom they share sophisticated customer relationship management (CRM) systems. These systems provide closed-loop tie-in for all touchpoints, giving each team member a 360-degree view of each customer. Once the need for advanced AE management education with a customer/facility has been identified, an AE specialist’s first interaction with an HCP’s office team is typically triggered in one of four ways:



In the first engagement with the office's nurse(s), the AE specialist provides the specific support required for the acute situation and begins building a relationship with the clinic staff. The result is more patients completing their therapy course, which increases the odds for successful clinical outcomes.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, even though specialty drugs are often prescribed to treat debilitating or even fatal diseases, specialty-drug adherence rates are often as distressingly low as those of their non-specialty counterparts. To reverse poor specialty-drug adherence, biopharma manufacturers are starting to deploy specialized clinical teams of AE specialists that work with nurses, pharmacists, prescribers, and office teams to overcome adverse events and help patients stay on therapy.

An AE Specialist's relationship with the clinical team increases clinic awareness by encouraging increased monitoring, communication, and management leading to more positive outcomes. A positive AE management experience with one patient builds clinic confidence to extend the success to other appropriate patients, ultimately saving more lives.



About Amplity's Customer Care Solutions

Amplity's patient-centric approach to customer care provides patients and HCPs with multiple channels of communication to gain access to critical information.

Our Customer Care solutions include but aren't limited to adverse event and product complaint handling, sample and sales rep requests, medical information, product replacement and reimbursement. Learn more on [Amplity.com](https://www.amplity.com).

[Contact us](#) when you're ready to discuss how we can partner to create better healthcare solutions.

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