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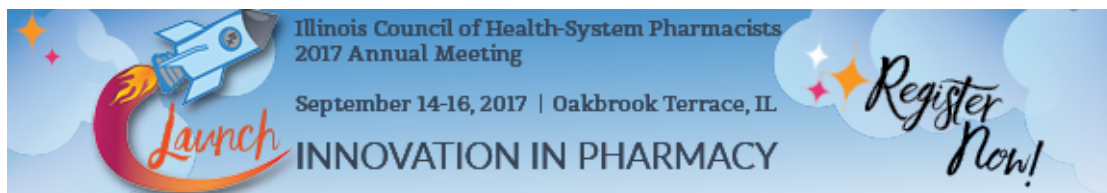
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Directly Speaking Pharmacists, the health care team's Caddie!

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by Scott A. Meyers, Executive Vice President

I had the opportunity to join some of my pharmacy golf buddies on the Friday of the US Open at Erin Hills Golf Club outside Milwaukee this past June. What a challenging golf course! Besides the fact the it costs \$290 for a round of golf there, when the course is open to the public, which it normally is but hasn't been since November of last year in preparation for one of the 4 "Majors", it is tough as nails to play and longer than any other course on the tour this year! So the only way I'm ever playing it is if someone else is paying and nobody is watching!

What struck me while we were there was that most of the threesomes playing on the second day before the midway cut played with no special hoopla or treatment. But when golfers in the top 10 in the world came by, they all had a 2 to 4 man police detail plus an additional 2 to 4 member team with "No Photo" signs to hold up when they were hitting or putting. First of all, tickets were purchased for \$125 each to stand in the hot sun to watch these athletes compete. "You mean I can't even take their picture as they walk by?" was my first thought. My second thought was, "Oh how wonderful it would be if I could play well enough to be here playing with them! But I wouldn't keep people from taking my picture as I walked by!"

Anyway, I digress. By the end of that second day at the Open, most of the World's Top Ten were eliminated. Very few big names for the final two days – not what the US Golf Association had really planned. But it also meant that there was a strong chance that a new star would be born, and in fact, that's exactly what happened. Brooks Koepka, a 25-year old Floridian, won his first "Major" with a 16 under par total of 272. He earned \$2,160,000 for 4 days of competition and a lifetime of work!

Something more important occurred to me eventually. There was another key human element present with every golfer in every threesome at this and every professional golf tournament – the caddies. And it reminded me of pharmacy and pharmacists. Not like the caddies in the movie "Caddyshack," but real true golf professionals who help their professional golfer do their best every time they take a stroke. I've watched professional golf a lot but being there in person helped me really think about the roles caddies play. Pharmacists in many ways, perform very much like caddies on the Pro Tour! We help with club selection (drug product selection), we help read the greens (antibiotic stewardship, opioid stewardship, lab value interpretation), we provide distances to the hole (recommend lengths of therapies, identify medication duplications, possible interactions and potential side effects) and provide general confidence and encouragement along the course (of treatment).

Often caddies challenge their Pro during club or shot selection. Suggesting a different approach to the green or different route out of the sand trap. Many times they have the club ready before the golfer requests it because they know what shot is needed, the skill of their professional and the conditions that the Pro faces. This comes from years

of training, studying and playing (most caddies are very good golfers themselves). Does any of this sound remotely similar?

Caddies proudly wear what is called an apron that bears the name of their professional so that fans can see from a distance who is approaching, who hit that shot, or who just proved that even pros can miss green. This is probably the one thing most pharmacists don't do yet, but a few do and someday many more will have their own physician or group of physicians to assist in therapy selection. Maybe then we'll wear something like the caddies' aprons to let the patients and others know whose bag we're carrying.

As a side thought, in professional golf, the caddie normally receives 5-10% of the player's winnings, although every caddie may work their own special deal. In Brooks Koepka's case, his caddie Ricky Elliott, probably pulled down a cool \$216,000 for a week's work, and again as a result of a lifetime of study and training. I'm not sure pharmacists would want 5-10% of what one physician makes (although 10% of some specialists' annual incomes wouldn't look bad), but considering that most health-systems have a lot more doctors than they do pharmacists (it would be like one caddie for several golfers – sometimes called a forecaddie), that plan might work.

It's very clear caddies make a difference with their professionals. Many have lost their jobs as a result of bad distance advice, club selection, or poorly read greens. And many have helped their Pro win hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars with their guidance and knowledge. And it's also clear that good pharmacists can improve the care provided to their patients. Pharmacists aren't the only other player on the health care team, but if you think about it, we are probably the player that can make the most difference on the performance of the team and its leader. Yes, you still have to be the Pro that hits the ball, just like it almost always takes a physician to run the health care team, but the caddie and the pharmacist can make a big difference if they are used correctly and are trusted and respected!

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