

Medicare Rx Update: December 22, 2006

January preparation... the best medicine for beneficiaries

January is the busiest month in the pharmacy due to changes that millions of Americans make to their insurance coverage that take effect in January. For this reason, we have been encouraging Medicare beneficiaries to help pharmacists by taking 3 easy steps:

1. If you have a prescription or refill that can be filled at or near the end of 2006, don't wait... get it filled before January 1. Taking care of refills in December will reduce the burden on pharmacists and may reduce the time a beneficiary has to wait to get the prescription filled in January.

2. If you have a prescription to be filled in early January and you have changed plans or have not used your new plan coverage, make sure you bring your new insurance card (and proof of Medicaid or LIS eligibility if applicable) to the pharmacy with your prescription. Providing correct and complete information to the pharmacist will make it easier for the pharmacist to serve beneficiaries which will reduce prescription fill times and delays at the pharmacy. Beneficiaries should be sure to have their Plan ID card, Medicare and/or Medicaid card, and a Photo ID (See Quick Tips for the first trip to the pharmacy: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/downloads/firststripenglish.pdf>). People who been approved for the low-income subsidy (LIS) should also bring a copy of the yellow automatic enrollment letter from Medicare, an approval letter from the Social Security Administration, or other proof that they qualify for extra help.

3. If you have not received your new insurance card from your new plan, make sure that you bring a confirmation letter or some other proof of coverage from your new plan with you to the pharmacy in January. Because people may enroll in Part D through the end of December, some late enrollees may not receive their plan ID card by the first day of the New Year (see Tip Sheet: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/States/Downloads/NoMembershipCard.pdf>). In this case, beneficiaries should bring an acknowledgement or confirmation letter from the plan, or an enrollment confirmation number received from the Plan. If the person has not received any enrollment materials, the pharmacist may be able to submit an E1 query, or call the dedicated pharmacy enrollment/eligibility helpline (1-866-835-7595) or 1-800-MEDICARE to identify the plan in which the person is enrolled. As a last resort, the beneficiary may have to pay out-of-pocket for the prescription and send receipts to the plan.

Point of Sale Option improved for 2007...

CMS will continue to contract with WellPoint to provide Point-of-Sale Facilitated Enrollment (POS FE) for those qualified low-income beneficiaries who are not enrolled in a Part D plan. To avoid submission of ineligible claims, CMS and Wellpoint will include tighter front-end edits to check for eligibility at the POS. These edits will allow the pharmacist to know how to properly adjudicate claims at the POS rather than submitting the claim through WellPoint POS FE only to have it reversed weeks or months later due to ineligibility.

CMS anticipates that far fewer beneficiaries will need to use the POS in 2007 because the vast majority of dual eligibles are already enrolled in a Part D plan. In addition, CMS and States have worked to prospectively identify beneficiaries so they can be enrolled in a Part D plan as of the effective date of their dual eligibility. Pharmacists should review the POS Tip Sheet for further information on the 2007 POS program (<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/States/Downloads/pos4steps.pdf>).

... And finally, thanks for all you do

For one last time in 2006, we want to take this opportunity to thank the entire pharmacy community for all that has been done to help Medicare beneficiaries take advantage of the new Medicare drug benefit. The accomplishments of Medicare Part D have been reflected in numerous customer satisfaction polls and millions of prescriptions filled and that is a tremendous tribute to pharmacists and all who have been involved with us in this historic endeavor.

Please accept our best wishes for a safe holiday season and a Happy New Year.

S. Lawrence Kocot

Senior Advisor to the Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Sign up for the **PHARMACY_MMA-L** list to receive the Medicare Rx Update:
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/maillinglists/default.asp?audience=4>