

RxCONNECTOR

A publication of the North Dakota Insurance Department

OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

For more than 20 years, National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM) has educated women about early breast cancer detection, diagnosis and treatment. NBCAM continues reaching out to women with several key messages, most notably, the importance of early detection through annual mammography screening for women over 40, or earlier for women at increased risk.

Mammography screenings are a woman's best chance for detecting breast cancer early. When coupled with new treatment options, mammography screenings can significantly improve a woman's chances of survival. We are pleased that our efforts have contributed to more women than ever participating in mammography screening. Independent reports indicate that this has been instrumental in the

increase in the survival rate for women with breast cancer.

Here are additional resources related to breast cancer:

- **National Breast Cancer Awareness Month Website** ~ www.nbcam.com
- **The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation** ~ www.komen.org
- **American Cancer Society** ~ www.cancer.org



Welcome to the RxConnector newsletter!



This newsletter is designed to keep you up to date about the Prescription Connection for ND program and to keep you in the know about the various prescription assistance programs that are available. In addition, from time to time, we may also include other items of interest related to Medicare and the Senior Health Insurance Counseling (SHIC) program.

We've got a busy schedule this fall with many outreach events planned. Please visit our event calendar at <http://www.nd.gov/ndins/consumer/details.asp?ID=238> to find out where we will be and when.

If you have items of interest that you think should be included in this newsletter, we would love to hear about them! Please contact Sharon St. Aubin by email at sstaubin@nd.gov or call her toll free at 888.575.6611.

As always, thanks for all your hard work for both the SHIC and Prescription Connection programs!

**Contact the
Department:**

**1.888.575.6611
insurance@nd.gov
www.state.nd.us/ndins**

**NORTH
DAKOTA**
a program of the
North Dakota
Insurance Department

**Prescription
Connection**
for North Dakota

REVIEW OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EXTRA HELP

The reviews for eligibility for extra help must begin within the first 12 months of a beneficiary's eligibility. If the Medicare beneficiary became eligible between January and April 2006, or applied for Extra Help in 2005 and became eligible in January 2006, the review may be as early as August 2006.

If a Medicare beneficiary's eligibility started in May 2006 or later, the review will be no earlier than August 2007.

Social Security will mail a letter to the beneficiary of Extra Help. This letter will include what the records show and will tell the beneficiary what to do next. **If this information is correct, the beneficiary should do nothing.**

If the information has changed, the beneficiary will return a one-page letter, enclosed with the mailing, to Social Security within 15 days. A cost of living increase in Social Security will

NOT be considered a change for the beneficiary to report. Once the beneficiary has returned the one page letter to Social Security, then Social Security will send a form called, "Social Security Administration Review of Your Eligibility for Extra Help." The beneficiary has 30 days to complete and return this form.

Social Security will send a letter to the beneficiary explaining the decision reached.

PART D ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO KIDNEY PATIENTS

ROCKVILLE, MD, Aug. 28 - A proposal by the American Kidney Fund (AKF) to launch Medicare Part D assistance programs for kidney patients has received a favorable opinion from the Office of Inspector General (OIG) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Advisory Opinion No. 06-09 opens the way for pharmaceutical manufacturers and others to contribute to AKF's new Medicare Part D assistance programs. These assistance programs will help Medicare patients who have chronic kidney disease (CKD) and end stage renal disease (ESRD).

OIG favorably reviewed an AKF proposal under which pharmaceutical manufacturers and others would make donations to AKF for

the purpose of implementing programs to subsidize premiums for Medicare Part D plans; patient cost-sharing obligations under Medicare Part D; and/or Part-D cost-sharing for products that manage conditions specific to CKD or ESRD, such as bone disease.

"Our Medicare Part D assistance programs will help to close the coverage gap that many individuals with CKD and ESRD have encountered," said Carol Lynn Halal, Managing Director for Programs for AKF. "The OIG's favorable opinion allows us to move forward with our plans to develop these vital new programs and begin fundraising for their implementation."

For more information, visit www.kidneyfund.org.

WYETH PAP TO COVER SOME IN THE DONUT HOLE

JoAnn from Prescription Connection has spoken with a representative from Wyeth regarding their patient assistance program for people on Medicare. Wyeth's program is primarily for individuals who have not enrolled in a drug plan. However, if they

did enroll and find they are having financial difficulty they can write a letter to Wyeth which includes their Social Security Number, date of birth and a signature from the physician. Individuals who have reached the donut hole can do the same thing to ap-

ply for Wyeth's assistance program.

The letter should be stapled to the application. The Wyeth rep said, "Be sure to use a lot of staples so they would be difficult to remove."

LIONS CLUB PROVIDES ASSISTANCE TO BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

The Lions provide 600,000 free professional glaucoma screenings and make 20,000 corneal transplants possible each year.

The Lions extend their commitment to sight conservation and work with the blind through countless local efforts.

The Lions provide thousands each year with free quality eye care, eye glasses, Braille-writers large print texts, white canes and guide dogs.

The Lions are also involved in a variety of other activities to improve their communities and help people in need, such as assisting the hearing impaired, providing diabetes

awareness and education materials, working on environmental projects and developing youth programs.

Contact your local Lions program if you know someone who has need of assistance in any of these areas.

For more information see:

<http://www.lionsclubs.org>

VISION USA PROVIDES EYE CARE ASSISTANCE

VISION USA, started nationwide in 1991, is a program developed by doctors of optometry who are members of the American Optometric Association. Approximately 340,000 low income working Americans have benefited from free eye exams through VISION USA.

- More than 40 million low-income, working people in the United States cannot afford the cost of routine eye care or the health insurance that covers it. As income earners, they don't qualify for government aid and private health-care assistance.
- Now a year-round program, VISION USA can help these people by providing basic eye health and vision care services free of charge to the many uninsured low-income people and their families who have no other means of obtaining care.

ELIGIBILITY

The program is open to children and adults of all ages who qualify. Here are the general eligibility requirements, although they may vary

FREE DIABETES KIT

Xubex and Bayer offer FREE Diabetes Kit Program (8/27/06) Xubex in cooperation with Bayer Diagnostics is pleased to provide all qualified individuals with a FREE diabetes care kit.

To receive your free Kit, patient or the healthcare provider can apply online:

<https://secure.xubex.com/apply/diabetes.aspx>

by state. To receive free services, individuals must:

- Have a job or live in a household where there is one working member;
- Have no vision insurance (this may include Medicare/Medicaid);
- Have income below an established level based on household size; and
- Not have had an eye exam within 2 years.

If an individual or family is eligible, they will be matched with a volunteer doctor of optometry who will provide a comprehensive eye exam at no charge. The doctors are donating their services and may be limited in some areas.

Eyewear may also be provided at no cost or for a small fee/donation in some states.

For more information see:

<http://www.aoa.org/x1061.xml>

MEDICARE PART D

Reminder: Abbot, Astra-Zeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Novartis and Pfizer have all indicated they will review on a case by case basis individuals enrolled in Part D who have financial hardship.

HIGHER PART B PREMIUMS FOR HIGHER-INCOME MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES

Medicare premiums will rise 5.6% next year — to \$93.50 a month.

Higher-income Medicare beneficiaries in 2007 will be required for the first time to pay higher Part B premiums. The means testing, which will be phased in over three years, will affect about 1.2 million beneficiaries in 2007.

The provision calls for beneficiaries with higher incomes to pay an income-based surcharge on the standard Part B monthly premium, which Medicare officials estimated will be \$93.50 for 2007.

Individual beneficiaries with adjusted gross annual incomes of \$80,000 to \$100,000 will pay a surcharge of 13.3%, or about \$13 per month, for a total monthly premium of about \$106. Others could pay \$162 a month depending on their income.

✦ Individuals with annual incomes between \$80,000 and \$100,000 and married couples with annual incomes between \$160,000 and \$200,000 in 2007 will pay a monthly premium of \$106;

✦ Individuals with annual incomes between \$100,000 and

\$150,000 and married couples with annual incomes between \$200,000 and \$300,000 in 2007 will pay a monthly premium of \$124.70;

✦ Individuals with annual incomes between \$150,000 and \$200,000 and married couples with annual incomes between \$300,000 and \$400,000 in 2007 will pay a monthly premium of \$143.40; and

✦ Individuals with annual incomes of \$200,000 or more and married couples with annual incomes of \$400,000 or more in 2007 will pay a monthly premium of \$162.10

(Pugh, [Miami Herald](#), 9/12).

FLU SEASON IS HERE

Just a reminder that flu season is here. Now is the time to remind your clients that it is important to get a flu shot.

Those who are 65 or older or folks with long term health issues including:

- heart disease
- lung disease
- kidney disease
- diabetes
- asthma, and
- anemia.

Other people who should consider getting a flu shot includes people with chronic medical conditions, those with weakened immune systems, physicians, care givers, or family members who may come in contact with people at risk for getting the flu.

Here are some tips to lower your chances of catching a cold or the flu:

- Get plenty of rest;

- Eat well-balanced meals;
- Drink more fluids;
- Stay home if you have any symptoms of the flu;
- Restrict contact with people who have the flu or a cold;
- Wash your hands frequently; and
- Cover your mouth when coughing.

Flu season generally runs from October to March. Flu, along with pneumonia, combine to be the fifth leading cause of death in older Americans.

Flu shots are covered by Medicare and because the flu virus changes from year to year, it is important to get a flu shot flu season.

Medicare covers these shots once a flu season in the fall or winter for all people with Medicare.

Medicare also covers pneumococcal shots, which will prevent pneumonia, for all Medicare beneficiaries. Most people only need this shot once in their lifetime.

WEEKLY SUMMARY: Rx OUTREACH and XUBEX HAVE ADDED NEW MEDICATIONS

Rx Outreach and Xubex have recently added the following medications to its list of drugs available at a discount:

- Cyclobenzaprine
- Meloxicam tablet
- Quaaluan® capsule (Quinine Sulfate)
- Sertraline tablet
- Ticlopidine tablet

Xubex has added:

- Anucort-Hc Supp
- Atropine Oph Solution
- Baclofen Tabs
- Betamethasone
- Aug. Dipropionate Crea
- Betamethasone Dipropionate cream

- Citalopram
- Diltiazem ER capsule
- Flexeril Tabs
- Fluocinolone Acetonide Cream
- Fluocinonide crea
- Fluphenazine Decanoate Injection
- Foltab-800 Tabs
- Glimepiride Tabs
- Hyoscyamine-SL Tabs
- Isoniazid Tabs
- Levobunolol Oph Solution
- Levothyroxine
- Metformin-XR
- Methotrexate Tabs
- Methylprednisolone Tab
- Pentoxifyline
- Pilocarpine Oph. Solution
- Selegiline Tabs

- Sulfamethoxazole
- Trimethoprim DS tablet
- Timolol Oph. Solution
- Tizanidine
- Triamcinolone Acet. Cream

Oxygen: for donated supplies try a request to your local supplier or contact the American Lung Association at www.lungusa.org or 1-800-LUNGUSA

Don't forget that the next open enrollment period for Medicare Part D starts on November 15 and runs until December 31, 2006

MANY MEDICATIONS AVAILABLE THROUGH PRESCRIPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Listed by drug class, these commonly prescribed medications are available through the pharmaceutical companies' patient assistance programs. Other medications in these drug classes are also available through

patient assistance programs. To find out more information about these medications, and 800 other medications available through patient assistance programs, register for free to search the RxAssist database.

ANTI-DIABETIC MEDICATIONS				
Brand Name/Brand Name equivalent	Generic Name	Company program	Average Retail Price*	PAP Form available online
Amaryl	glimipiride	Sanofi-Aventis	\$/30 tablets	yes
Avandia tablets	rosiglitazone maleate	GlaxoSmithKline	\$\$\$\$ /60 tablets	yes
Glucotrol	glipizide	Pfizer	\$/60 tablets	yes
Glucophage	metformin	Bristol-Myers Squibb	\$\$/60 tablets	yes
Humulin, Humalog	insulin	Eli Lilly	\$\$/1 vial	yes
Nolog, Novolin	insulin	Novo Nordisk	\$\$/1 vial	yes

Continued on page 6...

ANTI-ASTHMATIC MEDICATIONS

Brand Name/Brand Name equivalent	Generic Name	Company program	Average Retail Price*	PAP Form available online
Accolate	zafirlukast	AstraZeneca	\$\$\$ / 80 tablets	yes
Advair Diskus	fluticasone propionate and salmeterol	GlaxoSmithKline	\$\$\$\$/1 diskus	yes
Atrovent	ipratropium inhalation aerosol	Boehringer Ingelheim	\$\$\$/1 inhaler	yes
Azmacort	triamcinolone inhalation aerosol	KOS	\$\$\$/1 inhaler	yes
Flovent	fluticasone propionate inhalational aerosol	GlaxoSmithKline	\$\$\$/1 inhaler	yes
Pulmcort Respules	budesonide inhalation suspension	AstraZeneca	\$\$\$\$/30 plastic containers	yes
Serevent	salmeterol inhalation aerosol	GlaxoSmithKline	\$\$\$\$/1 inhaler	yes
Singulair	montelukast sodium	Merck	\$\$\$/30 5mg chew tabs	yes
Ventolin	albuterol inhalation aerosol	RxOutreach GlaxoSmithKline	\$/ 1 inhaler	yes yes

ANTI-ANXIETY/ANTI-DEPRESSANTS

Brand Name/Brand Name equivalent	Generic Name	Company program	Average Retail Price*	PAP Form available online
Buspar	bupirone	RxOutreach	\$/60 tablets	yes
Celexa	citalopram	RxOutreach Forest	\$/120 ml solution	yes yes
Depakote	divalproex sodium	Abbott	\$/60 tabs	yes
Effexor Effexor XR	venlafaxine	Wyeth	\$\$\$/30 tablets	yes
Klonopin	clonazepam	Roche	\$/30 tablets	no
Lexapro	escitalopram oxalate	Forest	\$\$\$/30 tablets	yes
Paxil	paroxetine HCL	GlaxoSmithKline	\$\$\$/ 30 tablets	yes
Prozac	fluoxetine HCL	RxOutreach Eli Lilly	\$\$\$\$/30 capsules	yes
Valium	diazepam	Roche	\$/30 tablets	no
Wellbutrin	bupropion HCL	GlaxoSmithKline	\$\$\$\$/90 tablets	yes
Zoloft	sertraline	Pfizer	\$\$\$/30 tablets	yes

CARDIOVASCULAR & ANTI-HYPERTENSIVE

Brand Name/Brand Name equivalent	Generic Name	Company program	Average Retail Price*	PAP Form available online
Aceon	perindopril erbumin	Solvay	\$\$/30 tablets	no
Accupril	quinapril HCl	Pfizer	\$/30 tablets	yes
Accuretic	quinapril and hydrochlorothiazide	Pfizer	\$\$/30 tablets	yes
Calan	verapamil	RxOutreach	\$/90 tablets	yes
Capoten	captopril	RxOutreach	\$/100 tablets	yes
Cardizem	diltiazem	KOS	\$/90 tablets	yes
Catapres	Clonidine HCL	Boehringer Ingelheim	\$/60 tablets	yes
Lipitor	atorvastatin calcium	Pfizer	\$\$\$/\$30 tablets	yes
Lotensin, Lotensin HCT	benazepril (and benazepril HCT)	RxOutreach	\$\$/30 tablets	yes
Monopril	fosinopril	Bristol-Myers Squibb	\$\$\$/\$60 tablets	yes
Mavik Tablets Tarka Tablets	trandolapril tablets	Abbott	\$\$/30 tablets	yes
Mevacor	lovostatin	RxOutreach	\$\$/30 tablets	yes
Norvasc	amlodipine besylate	Pfizer	\$\$/30 tablets	yes
Plendil	felodipine	AstraZeneca	\$\$/30 tablets	yes
Prinivil	lisinopril	RxOutreach	\$\$/2 bottles	yes
Procardia XL	nifedipine ER	Pfizer	\$\$\$/\$90 capsules	yes
Tenormin	atenolol	RxOutreach	\$\$/30 tablets	yes
Timoptic	timolol maleate	Merck	\$/1 bottles	yes
Vasotec	enalapril maleate	RxOutreach	\$/30 tablets	yes
Zetia	ezetimide	Merck	\$\$\$/\$30 tablets	yes
Zocor	simvastatin	Merck	\$\$/30 tablets	yes

* Price information was collected on 12/21/2005 using www.drugstore.com. The prices given are based on the lowest dosage available, for a one-month supply, and, where available, the price range is based on the cost of generic medication. Prices vary widely based on the pharmacy used and geographic location of the patient. For more accurate assessment of the cost of a medication, call your local pharmacies.

PRICE KEY:

\$ ~ under \$20

\$\$ ~ \$21-\$50

\$\$\$ ~ \$51-\$100

\$\$\$\$ ~ \$100-\$150