MAY 2007

RxCONNECTOR

A publication of the North Dakota Insurance Department

DIABETES EDUCATION PRODUCTS

1) BD Diabetes has complimentary education products and "Getting Started Take Home Kits for Syringes & Pen Needles", as well as syringes, that are available for your clinic and/or practice at no charge. To order, visit www.bddiabetes.com. The phone number for the BD Insulin Syringe Program is 866.818.6906. BD also has a program that will provide a three-month supply of syringes for $15.00.

2) NeedyMeds is now able to help clinics that serve low and no income clients obtain free diabetic supplies and over-the-counter medications. The products provided are new, although some of the packaging may be damaged. The provider of the supplies guarantees the products are in good condition and function as designed. The products are sent to clinics only. Individuals are not eligible to participate in this program. Supplies available:

- Diabetic Supplies
- Over-the-Counter Medications

To participate, clinics must meet the following criteria:

- Be a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, an educational institution; or
- Run by a governmental agency; provide direct services on site treatment to patients; and have a

Continued on next page.

Welcome to the RxConnector newsletter!

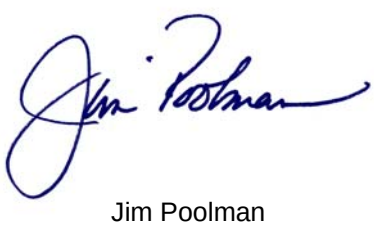
Jim Poolman
Insurance Commissioner

Dear Friends,

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.

As always, thank you so much for all that you do for the Prescription Connection program! Without your help, our work would be that much harder. Your efforts are valued and appreciated!

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.



Jim Poolman
Insurance Commissioner

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

Continued from first page....

licensed healthcare provider (MD, DO, PA, RN, Nurse Practitioner, or pharmacist) available to receive and distribute the supplies.

NeedyMeds will email the clinics when items are available. Each clinic will email its request for supplies. NeedyMeds will determine which items are sent to each clinic. The products will be directly from the donor's facility. For more information, visit NeedMeds website: http://www.needymeds.com/supplyassistance/sapintro.tml

3) **Eli Lilly** is introducing the first insulin pen with a memory chip to track doses. The pen will cost approximately $100.00 (not including the insulin cartridges) and the company said that it will provide coupons for consumers to purchase the pen for $45.00. For more information on the product, see: http://newsroom.lilly.com/ReleaseDetail.cfm?ReleaseID=230738

CLOPIDOGREL, THE GENERIC FOR PLAVIX

Clopidogrel, the generic version of Plavix, was originally released during the summer of 2006. However, the generic version was removed from the market a short time later because of a patent dispute.

Many pharmacies received supplies of Clopidogrel before the dispute came up and consequently had a supply of the drug that was being dispensed to some individuals over the past couple of months, even though the generic is not really available in the marketplace.

The Reference NDC list (master list of drugs) does not currently have Clopidogrel listed as an available drug and this list is used to derive the drug look-up list on the drug plan finder. Once the generic is available on the list, it will be added to the drug look-up list on the drug plan finder.

In the meantime, plans can cover Clopidogrel. However, plans must continue to cover the brand drug, Plavix, under their plan's formulary and at the same tier level.

Plans are not permitted to:

- Discontinue the coverage of Plavix;
- Change the tier level; or
- Change the utilization management for the drugs (ex. they cannot add prior authorization, step therapy, or quantity limit requirements for the drug).

MEDICARE PART D APPEALS MANUAL AVAILABLE

The Medicare Rights Center has created a free, comprehensive, easy-to-understand Part D appeals manual for advocates who help people with Medicare get the drugs they need.

This 25-page manual offers a complete overview of the entire appeals process, real-life case examples from their Client Services department, a glossary of important Part D appeals protocol for advocates, and links to important resources and documents.

To receive a copy of the manual, go to www.medicarerights.org/appealsmanual.html

A webinar detailing the appeals process is also available. You can listen to a recording of the webinar by clicking here. (Approximately 90 minutes)

If you would like to download a copy of the presentation, please click here.

You can access past webinars here:

www.medicarerights.org/webinars.html

IVAX ADDS NEW PROGRAMS

IVAX (now part of Teva) has added new programs to their PAP services. Carmen of the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic in Oregon reports that the program will cover 2 QVAR every 60 days and 1 Nasarel every 60 days.

The important thing is to write the script for the quantity covered. For instance, if you only write a script for 1 QVAR, the patient will not be able to get any more until after the 60 day period.

To help navigate the phone system, Carmen has created worksheets which are posted at: www.rxassist.org/providers/listserv.cfm

ZELNORM AND PERGOLIDE TAKEN OFF MARKET

Zelnorm and pergolide have been taken off the market due to safety reasons.

On March 30, 2007, The FDA ordered that Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, "willingly" stop marketing Zelnorm (generic: tegaserod) based on the recent findings of an increased risk of serious cardiovascular adverse events (heart problems) associated with use of the drug. Accordingly, Novartis has agreed to voluntarily suspend marketing of the drug in the United States. The FDA is currently advising patients who are using Zelnorm to get in touch with their health care providers to discuss treatment alternatives. Patients who are taking Zelnorm should seek emergency medical care if they experience severe chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, sudden onset of weakness or difficulty walking or talking, or other symptoms of a heart attack or stroke.

See in-depth story on pergolide on next page

LISTERINE AGENT COOL BLUE RINSE RECALLED

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has announced a voluntary nationwide recall of all lots of Listerine Agent Cool Blue Plaque-Detecting Rinse.

The FDA said the manufacturer of the rinse, McNeil-PPC Inc., a Johnson & Johnson subsidiary, decided to recall approximately 4 million bottles after finding the rinse had been contaminated with microorganisms.

XUBEX PAP NOW OFFERS AMBIEN

The generic version of Ambien has been added to the Xubex site, http://www.xubex.com/medications.shtml .

Patients applying for Xubex services must meet all of the following guidelines to qualify for their programs:

- Be a United States resident;
- Must provide a recent proof of income;
- Must provide a valid prescription indication number of refills.

Patients enrolled in Medicare Part D are eligible. Annual income for enrollment in the program should meet the income* requirements in the chart in the next column:

Number of People in Household	Annual Gross Income
1	Less Than $24,674
2	Less Than $32,141
3	Less Than $40,890
4	Less Than $48,675

**Applies to the 48 contiguous states and District of Columbia*

PERGOLIDE (PERMAX) WITHDRAWN FROM MARKET

The FDA is notifying consumers that the companies that manufacture and distribute pergolide have agreed to withdraw this drug from the market due to the potential for heart valve damage.

Two new studies showed that patients with Parkinson's disease who were treated with pergolide had an increased chance of serious damage to their heart valves when compared to patients who did not receive the drug.

Pergolide is a member of a class of drugs known as dopamine agonists and is used with levodopa and carbidopa to manage the signs and symptoms (tremors and slowness of movement) of Parkinson's disease.

Patients with Parkinson's disease who are taking pergolide should:

- Contact their healthcare professional to discuss alternate treatment options.
- NOT stop taking pergolide without consulting their healthcare professional, since stopping pergolide too quickly can be dangerous and several other effective treatments are available.

Healthcare professionals who prescribe pergolide should consider the following:

- Assess the patient's need for dopamine agonist (DA) therapy.
- If continued treatment with a DA is necessary, another DA should be substituted for pergolide. There are other dopamine agonists approved for the treatment of Parkinson's disease that are not associated with heart valve damage. Published transition regimens describe the conversion from one DA to another.
- If treatment with a DA is to be discontinued, pergolide should not be stopped abruptly, because rapid discontinuation of all dopamine agonist therapies can be dangerous. Instead, gradually decrease the dose of pergolide.
- Patients who will be taken off pergolide should be told that other effective options for treatment exist, including three other DAs that are not associated with damage to heart valves.

In 2006, a boxed warning regarding the risk of serious heart valve damage was added to the labeling for pergolide. The two recent studies, published in The New England Journal of Medicine in January 2007, confirm earlier studies that also described this problem. Pergolide is marketed by Valeant under the trade name Permax and sold and manufactured as the generic drug pergolide by Par and Teva.

In light of this additional safety information and the availability of alternative treatments for Parkinson's disease that do not have comparable safety problems, the companies that manufacture and sell pergolide have stopped shipping pergolide for distribution and will, in cooperation with FDA, work to remove from the market both the name brand Permax (pergolide) and the generic versions of pergolide.

The effect of this voluntary withdrawal on supplies of pergolide currently in pharmacies will not be immediate. This delay will allow time for healthcare professionals and patients to discuss appropriate treatment options and to change treatments.

US BAYER MERGES WITH BERLEX

April 4, 2007 marks the formation of the new US Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals Inc, created through the integration of Bayer HealthCare's US pharmaceuticals division and Berlex Inc., (Schering AG, Germany's affiliate).

PATIENTS NEED TO DISCUSS MEDICATION COSTS

Derjung Mimi Tarn, an assistant professor of family medicine at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine said, "It is up to the patient to make the physician and pharmacist aware" (that their prescription drug costs are too high for them to afford.)

In a study published in the *American Journal of Managed Care*, Tarn found that one-third of doctors discussed cost, insurance supply, refills or cheaper generics with patients when writing prescriptions. The study also found that 2% of patients questioned their doctors about their options. Tarn said, "Physicians aren't always aware of patient costs and patients are often intimidated or embarrassed to talk about costs with their physician" (Bookwalter, *Los Angeles Times*, 3/19).

If your facility sends a newsletter to people who may be purchasing medications, perhaps including an article encouraging patients to talk with their physicians and pharmacists about their financial needs regarding the prescriptions they have been prescribed would be beneficial.

NEW APPLICATIONS

The following companies have new applications:

- Alpharma
- Merck
- RxOutreach
- Teva Azilect
- ViroPharma
- Alaven
- Anadrol
- AstraZeneca
- Par Pharmaceuticals

MEDICARE Rx CONNECT

Medicare Rx Connect is a user friendly site that may answer questions for you or for Medicare beneficiaries. The information is easy to access and includes items that are frequently questioned. Click on the following link and peruse the contents.

The message is ready to be sent with the following file or link attachments:

Shortcut to: http://www.maprx.info/

FAST RELIEF: PART D MONITORING PROJECT

The Medicare Rights Center (MRC) needs to hear about all the problems with the Medicare Part D benefit, whether they happen to you or someone in your community. With this information, the MRC will be armed with the needed evidence to push for a Medicare-administered drug benefit. Submit your story at

http://www.medicarerights.org/partdstories.html

UPDATE: DOSTINEX

Dostinex, from Pfizer's Connection to Care, has been on backorder for several months. We will keep you posted on the situation.

The Senior Health Insurance Counseling Program is looking for volunteers to assist in counseling Medicare beneficiaries across North Dakota. If you are interested, please call 1-888-575-6611 for more information.