



Academy of
Managed Care
Pharmacy®

February 12, 2014

Elaine Yeats
Agency Regulatory Coordinator
Department of Health Professions
9960 Maryland Drive
Henrico, VA 23233

Re:In support of petition to prohibit acceptance of coupons for dispensing because of the potential for medication safety concerns through incomplete DUR/profile data and transcription errors; would amend 18 VAC 110-20. Regulations Governing the Practice of Pharmacy

Dear Ms. Yeats:

The Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP) writes in support of the petition to prohibit acceptance of coupons for dispensing because of the potential for medication safety concerns and the potential to undermine formulary development and utilization management that health plans utilize to provide evidence-based, cost-effective access to medications. AMCP would support patient assistance programs offered through either philanthropic or manufacturer-sponsored organizations that offer assistance based on economic need or to ensure appropriate patient access to high-cost medications, particularly specialty products with no therapeutic alternative with high-cost sharing.

AMCP is a national professional association of pharmacists, physicians, nurses and other managed care practitioners with nearly 7,000 members who provide services on behalf of the more than 200 million Americans served by managed care organizations, including health plans and pharmacy benefit management companies. Our members are responsible for managing prescription drug benefits on behalf of clients of the managed care organizations that employ them. They are responsible for implementing a broad and diversified range of clinical, quality-oriented services and strategies whose objective is to assure that individual patients receive the appropriate drug at the right time in a convenient, cost-effective manner.

AMCP opposes the use of manufacturer coupons because the net result of these coupons is additional, unnecessary costs to plans, employers, state and federal governments and other payers. These programs often encourage patients to utilize high-cost medications when other formulary alternatives may be available at lower-cost sharing rates. Manufacturer coupons often steer patients to more-expensive products, but not necessarily clinically better products by eliminating the patient's cost differential among preferred agents. The manufacturer then reimburses the pharmacy for the cost of the coupon, but plans, employers, and federal and state governments are still be responsible for paying higher costs associated with that medication in reimbursement to the pharmacy. In many cases, medication classes offering prescription drug coupons (including statin medications to lower high cholesterol, medications for high

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blood pressure and other cardiovascular conditions) have multiple safe and effective alternatives available, including generics, at lower cost-sharing for patients. Medications included on a plan's formulary at more favorable cost sharing levels reduce patient, plan and payer costs by lowering overall medication spending.

Patients also often overlook that most coupon programs may only be used for a limited period of time and thus in the long run, may increase the cost of the medication for the patient. Many manufacturer programs limit the number of total prescription fills that qualify for the coupon, such as 12 total refills or 12 months total, and therefore, patients do not receive an indefinite benefit. Patients might then be forced to pay higher costs for the medication or change to a lower-cost, formulary alternative that would likely have been suitable at the beginning of therapy. In addition, additional costs incurred by plans and payers associated with providing the higher cost medications may also result in increased premium costs for patients.

AMCP also opposes the use of retail pharmacy coupons used to encourage patients to transfer prescriptions from a competing pharmacy. These coupons usually reward patients with store credit toward the purchase of non-pharmacy-related merchandise. When these coupons are used appropriately, patients may save money; however, patients who frequently transfer prescriptions among pharmacies to take advantage of such offers could see an increase in medication errors, duplicative therapy, and unnecessary medication-related problems. AMCP also opposes use of these coupons because of the safety concerns that result from pharmacies' and health plans' inability to access a full patient prescription record. This situation occurs because patients using the coupon may pay for the prescription in cash, rather than using their prescription drug benefit card, and thus the prescription would not be sent to the plan. While this might save the patient money, the plan has no record of the prescription and thus is unable to review the patient's record for duplicative claims, potential for adverse events, and for other medication-related problems. Therefore, if retail pharmacy coupons are used, at a minimum AMCP supports the requirement that cash claims be adjudicated to payers to ensure a medication record that allows for comprehensive drug utilization review and other safety checks used prior to dispensing.

AMCP thanks the Virginia Department of Health Professions for seeking comments on this important issue. AMCP reiterates support for programs that help patients afford prescription medications, but emphasizes that these programs should not be used when there is the potential to compromise patient safety and needlessly increase overall medication costs. If you have any questions, please contact me by email at erosato@amcp.org or by phone at 703-683-8416.

Sincerely,



Edith A. Rosato, R.Ph., IOM
Chief Executive Officer