



## CUR<sub>x</sub>ED

### Cornell University Resource Education for Medicare Part D

## DO YOU SEE WHAT I HEAR?

### THE CASE

CJ has just gotten his first computer and has been taking lessons on using the various programs that came with it, including e-mail and internet functions. Like most seniors, he is pretty new to the technology and is fascinated to learn about all of the information that is available over the web.

For his most recent assignment, CJ has been asked to explore an internet sight where he is required to enter information and have the website provide him with a calculation or a response of some type. CJ has Medicare and because he has heard so much about the Part D plan finder on Medicare.gov, he chooses to use this site for his assignment.

Initially, it takes CJ considerable time to navigate through the many options on the site. Eventually he gains comfort with it and gets to the plan finder where he can enter his medication regimen.

His enthusiasm quickly dampens, however, when he has trouble finding many of his medications. He also finds that when he is able to locate the name of a medication, the dosages from his list often do not match the options provided in the plan finder.

In frustration, CJ goes to visit his county health insurance assistance program for some extra tutoring. He figures that there is something lacking in his novice computer skills and is hoping to get a pointer or two before returning for his next lesson. CJ asks the counselor to help him enter his medication regimen into the plan finder.

CJ presents a list of medications to the counselor which he cannot find in the plan finder. The list includes:

Zantax 1mg three times a day.  
Prilozac 20mg daily  
Clonopine 1mg twice a day  
Viagra 60mg as needed  
Zocor 50mg daily

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**WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**  
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### Part D Trivia Question

In 2007, Medicare's overall spending amounted to \$432 billion. How much of this was accounted for by Part D?

- A. \$5 billion
- B. \$12 billion
- C. \$50 billion
- D. \$112 billion
- E. \$212 billion

## THE STUDY

CJ is having a difficulty which is very common. The names of several of his medications are misspelled. Other medications have dosage strengths which are mismatched. In general there is confusion as to the proper identity of the medications in his regimen.

Confusion such as this arises from the fact that there are many medications which have similar looking or similar sounding names. In the medical profession they are called “look alike” or “sound alike” drugs. Often, this error is caused by poor handwriting, or not speaking clearly, when communicating prescription information.

It is imperative to check the spelling and the dose of medications carefully. Obtain and look at the label on the prescription bottle. If in doubt, call the Pharmacy.

The Pharmacy may ask other questions to correctly identify the medication. Medications that are confused often have differing indications, or uses. Occasionally, the dosage form, such as whether it is a tablet or a capsule, might be helpful. Or, the color of the pill might help in the correct identification. The dosage strength might be a clue, but, adding to the confusion, many of the confused medications are available in the same dosage strengths. In any case, seek the help of a medical professional to be certain.

Below, is a very brief list of some of the more common medications which are regularly confused. It seems hard to think that they could be prone to error. But, take a minute and imagine them on paper in handwritten form, perhaps by someone with poor penmanship. Or, imagine them in spoken form, perhaps over a phone with a poor connection, maybe by a hurried caller using a cell phone.

It becomes easy to understand how the names can become blurred and confused by the unwary and unsuspecting consumer. Conceivably, it’s not unlike playing that childhood game where you whisper something to the person next to you and that person whispers it to the next person and so on, and by the time it gets all the way around the room....

COMMONLY CONFUSED MEDICATION NAMES					
DRUG NAME	COMMON USE	TYPICAL DOSE	DRUG NAME	COMMON USE	TYPICAL DOSE
Zantac	Dyspepsia	150mg	Xanax	Anxiety	1mg
Prozac	Depression	20mg	Prilosec	Dyspepsia	20mg
Hydroxyzine	Antihistamine	50mg	Hydralazine	Blood Pressure	50mg
Clonidine	Blood Pressure	0.1mg	Klonopin	Anxiety	1mg
Clozapine	Antipsychotic	100mg	Clonidine	Blood Pressure	0.1mg
Lorazepam	Anxiety	1mg	Alprazolam	Anxiety	1mg
Zyprexa	Antipsychotic	10mg	Zyrtec	Antihistamine	10mg
Viagra	Impotence	50mg	Allegra	Antihistamine	60mg
Zocor	High Cholesterol	20mg	Zoloft	Depression	50mg

### Part D Trivia Answer

In 2007, Part D accounted for about **\$50 billion dollars** in spending, or about 11.6% of total Medicare spending.

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