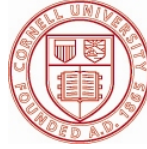


CASE STUDIES IN PART D

Volume 2 Number 9



Cornell University
College of Human Ecology

CUR_xED

Cornell University Resource Education for Medicare Part D

DOUBLE TROUBLE

THE CASE

During the tumultuous sixties, AH rebelled against the establishment of the time, making some bad judgments and showing significant imprudence in his behavior. Addiction to narcotics was an unfortunate consequence of his decisions and activities.

AH made many attempts at, and spent many years in rehab in his early 30's. Upon recovery, he was eventually started on a methadone maintenance program. He is now 68 years old and enjoying the full benefits of Medicare, including a Part D stand alone prescription drug benefit.

As a landscaper for most of his adult life, abuse of his body has taken its toll on his bones and joints. AH is in chronic pain and is seeking some relief from his physician. He continues to visit the clinic and take methadone for maintenance.

AH's physician is well aware of the precautions which must be regarded when prescribing narcotics to a former user. However, after many failed trials of other medications and careful monitoring, his physician decides to start him on a low dose of OxyContin CR. This is a long acting narcotic analgesic which will act as a maintenance pain reliever.

When AH presents his new prescription at the Pharmacy, it is refused by his Part D plan for payment. Both medications are on the plan's formulary but he is told that it is duplicate therapy, as the methadone and the OxyContin CR are used for the same purpose.

At home, AH checks the Medicare plan finder tool. Both medications are listed in the plan finder. Most plans, including AH's plan, show that they cover both medications. When AH calls his plan to learn more, he is told that the plan will cover one medication or the other, but not both.

AH is in pain, needs relief and certainly would like to avoid the drug seeking behaviors and problems of his very distant past. Trials of other, non-narcotic analgesics have been less than effective.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Part D Trivia Question

Of all prescriptions written, what percentage is for Part D?

- A. 20%
- B. 34.5%
- C. 55%
- D. 67.5%

THE STUDY

Methadone is a long acting medication which is used for pain relief as well as to maintain former addicts who are in recovery. OxyContin CR is the brand name for oxycodone and is also a long acting analgesic. Both are narcotics and derivatives of morphine.

Each of these agents is very effective for treating pain. Pharmacologically, using both medications at the same time represents a duplication of therapy. It is not usually an accepted medical practice to use both medications if they are being used for the same purpose.

In most situations, the customary standard of practice would be to increase the dose of one medication rather than to add a second drug. And, while the insurance plan would, under most circumstances, be justified in not providing coverage of two medications for the same purpose, a closer look is often warranted.

AH is using these medications for different purposes. One is for a narcotic maintenance program; the other is for pain relief. It would not be medically prudent to increase the dose of the methadone. This would only undermine his treatment for maintenance therapy and would probably provide inadequate pain relief. Utilizing only the OxyContin CR would more than likely help his pain, but would derail his maintenance treatment program.

This is a very delicate therapeutic area and often represents a clinical dilemma. However, the use of one drug for both purposes is probably not justifiable in this case.

There is a medically justifiable reason for AH to request an exception to the coverage of the new prescription, OxyContin CR. With information from his healthcare providers, AH should submit a request for coverage of both medications. AH should, however, continue to be closely monitored under the careful supervision of his physician.

Part D Trivia Answer

As of the third quarter, 2007, Part D prescriptions surpassed the **20%** threshold share of the total market. For people over age 65, Part D accounts for about 67.5% of total prescriptions.

CURxED Cornell University Resource Education for Medicare Part D

www.CURxED.human.cornell.edu/

email: CURxED@cornell.edu

This material is based upon work supported by a grant from the Dean of the College of Human Ecology and Smith Lever funds from the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.