

Sent: Monday, November 02, 2009 5:27 PM
To: PRESCRIBED PRODUCTS
Subject: Act 59 regarding free samples to health care providers

To whom this may concern:

It has come to my attention that there is a provision in Act 59 regarding the use of samples by health care providers. I am writing as both a patient and someone who works in the healthcare industry. I have a history of major depressive disorder and the use of samples has helped treat it. Often times, the available antidepressants and mood stabilizers, usually in the form of generics, have not helped or simply wore out its usefulness. If a new medication comes into the market that has the potential to better treat my depression, my doctor would give me a sample to see if it might help. If it does, then she would prescribe it. Of course, a generic would not be available since it takes nearly 10 years for the drug to be allowed to have a generic equivalent, so she would give me samples to tie me over. Fortunately, my insurance does have drug coverage so even a nongeneric drug would at most cost \$35 per month; however, sometimes that can be a hardship since I am on other medications as well. If a generic does come into the market for a medication I am taking, my insurance does notify me of it and then I make the switch, which has happened when the generic for Trileptal came into the market. I am currently on Seroquel for which there is no generic as of yet. I have found it indispensable in helping me sleep as well as stabilize my mood. Sometimes, my doctor has given me samples to tie me over when I run out and I am in between paychecks. She has never forced me to take Seroquel. We simply tried it out and it worked, something we would not have found out without samples. If a generic was available in that class of drugs that had the same properties as Seroquel, then my doctor would prescribe it or my insurance would let me know of one.

To take away the availability of samples would hurt patients in denying them the drugs that could possibly be the treatment for whatever is ailing them. It would not drive healthcare costs down. It would only create a situation where people would be using multiple inadequate drugs to treat a problem that a newer, perhaps nongeneric drug could treat more efficiently and effectively. Such decisions should be made by a healthcare professional. It has been my experience that doctors have the best intentions for their patients and are not shills for the pharmaceutical companies.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Michelle "Miki" Thomas

Burlington, VT 05401