

Sent: Saturday, November 07, 2009 12:01 AM
To: prescribedproducts@atg.state.vt.us
Subject: (no subject)

I am writing in regards to the current proposed legislation on free medication samples. I am a psychiatrist in private practice and am very concerned that if this legislation passes I will be forced to discontinue accepting samples. This would be very distressing for me but would be a serious hardship for many of my patients. My understanding of the issue is that there is concern that samples lead physicians to prescribe branded drugs in place of generic medications within the same class. I can not speak for other physicians but this is certainly not true for me or the other three prescribers in my office.

A. What criteria I use for the choice of the medication I prescribe for a patient is determined by:

1. What I believe is the best choice for this patient based on their symptoms, prior history of medications and side effects.
2. What is on their insurance's formulary
- 3 The affordability of the medications out of pocket costs
4. I will intentionally chose a branded medication at times for patients who have no insurance and can't afford to pay for any medications out of pocket so that I can provide them with samples.

B. Reasons why it is important to have samples available for distribution:

1. For patients without insurance.
2. When patients have high deductibles or large co-pays and are now unable to afford the branded medication that has kept them stable and doing well.
3. Many of my patient live on a very tight budget and can't afford to pay a large co-pay for a new medication that they buy and then are unable to take due to intolerable side effects.
4. When patients either change insurance companies or there is a change in their benefits and the branded medication they are on now requires either a prior authorization or if this is refused a letter of medical necessity which requires a 2 to 3 week response time. Without samples these patients could be with out medication for days to weeks unless they can afford to pay for their medications out of pocket while they are waiting to find out if their insurance company will cover their prescription.

C. Reasons why I would stop accepting samples if this legislation is passed:

1. Publishing the samples I sign for on a public web site would encourage break-ins. My office has already been broken in to twice already even without this information being readily available.
2. Concern that even if the samples were not listed on a public web site and only sent to the Attorney General's office that this information would not be used in a way that truly represents my prescribing practices because:
 - a. There are 4 prescribers in my office and we sign for samples based on who is available to sign for them at the time the pharmaceutical representative is there. I may sign for samples I use almost never or I may use frequently but there is no way to know this information from who signs for the samples.
 - b. The nature of my practice is not taken into consideration when comparing the samples I sign for compared to my prescribing habits. I have a tertiary practice and almost never see patients who have straight forward psychiatric problems. Almost all of my patients are either very complicated or very psychiatrically ill. They have been on multiple medications before they come to me and often have had multiple trials of generic drugs that did not work for them. I use a higher number of branded medications as a result since going back to a generic medication they previously failed is not clinically appropriate.

D. Loss of sample availability would result in:

1. Increased risk of relapse , worsening of symptoms, or hospitalization of my patients.
2. Potential increase in healthcare costs due to the items listed in the previous statement.
3. Financial hardship for many of my patients.
4. Reduced options for treatment for some of my patients.

Please consider my patients and their needs when you vote on this legislation. Samples are not for me they are for my patients. It will be very harmful to them if I no longer take samples at my office. Thank you for taking the time to read my correspondence.

Sincerely,
Susan N Legacy M.D.