

## **Express Scripts Step Therapy Study Committee Comments**

Good Morning. My name is Ben Twilley and I am a Senior Manager of State Government Affairs with Express Scripts. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and address the important topic of Step Therapy.

First, I believe it is important to mention that step therapy programs are designed and chosen by health plans and plan sponsors to meet their own individual needs. Express Scripts does not require clients to implement step therapy programs. Our clients choose to implement these programs because they provide high quality health care that employers and plan participants can afford.

Drug step therapy programs require that a member try a generic drug or lower-cost brand-name alternative drug before higher-cost non-preferred drugs, unless special circumstances exist. Express Scripts' independent Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee (P&T) review and approve the Drug Step Therapy programs, a group of 15 independent physicians and one pharmacist from active community and academic practices representing a broad range of medical specialties. These members, who are not employed by Express Scripts, are selected by the Committee based on their contributions to medical and pharmacy literature, national recognition in their specialty, involvement in clinical practice, and previous experience with P&T Committees. When developing a step therapy program, only drugs with similar safety and effectiveness are considered. The P&T Committee reviews clinical trials, medical guidelines, and peer reviewed journals to determine medications that would be good candidates for step therapy programs. Only after a drug is determined safe and effective to treat the condition are cost implications considered. The use of step therapy substantially increases the use of FDA approved, lower cost alternative brand and generic medications.

Express Scripts step therapy programs have just two steps. The first being the preferred lower cost generic or preferred brand medication. In the event the preferred lower cost generic or preferred brand medication is not effective a patient would then receive the originally prescribed medication. Our analysis shows that over 90% of patients that start on a preferred drug stay on the preferred drug; once a patient starts on a drug in the correct therapy class, they rarely need to change. Additionally, it is important to note, Express Scripts does not require a patient try a first line medication for a certain period of time before moving to the second line medication.

Express Scripts has an override/exception process to allow a patient to receive their medications, when a physician believes there are clinically valid reasons to bypass the step one agent and move right to the step two agent.

By focusing on clinically safe and effective medications Express Scripts is able to provide substantial savings for our patients and plan sponsors. For instance, our Preferred Drug Management programs have generated savings of up to 28 percent in high-cost categories such as Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) for heartburn. These products include Nexium, Prilosec, and their generic versions. Several clients (including unions, government, health plans, and corporate groups) instituted step therapy programs in the PPI category and saw significant success: Net costs for PPIs dropped by 13 to 28 percent (with an average savings of 21 percent).

Drugs with a high risk of abuse or overuse, such as pain medicines, are good candidates for step therapy to encourage the use of safer, first-line medically appropriate therapies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here and share some of the reasons Express Scripts believes step therapy programs provide value to our clients and patients while offering safe and effective lower costs medications. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.