



## Why Your Health Plan Needs a Consulting Pharmacist

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The cost for health insurance premiums have been trending at 2 - 5 times the rate of inflation for the past decade. We now know that the two primary inflationary drivers in health care are the cost of hospital services and pharmaceutical products. We also know that a small percentage (5% or less) of beneficiaries generate most of the costs (less than 60%) for any given health plan.

Health plans across the country are becoming proactive in their support for individual beneficiaries who are at risk for developing catastrophic complications as a result of their chronic illnesses.

Both physician and pharmacist consultants are now being retained to work with health plans. These professionals are inventorying, stratifying and strategically targeting medical risk within the health plan. In addition, they are determining the adequacy of the therapy at risk beneficiaries are receiving based upon national "best practice" data.

There are a number of important issues that the consulting pharmacist focuses upon when they are retained by the health plan to proactively serve the beneficiaries. Some of the issues are as follows:

1. Beneficiaries suffering from chronic disease take many medications. Multiple drugs increase the risk of drug interactions that can lead to avoidable catastrophic consequences.
2. Beneficiaries frequently are not receiving the medications that are indicated for their condition.
3. Beneficiaries are frequently using brand products where high quality generic alternatives are recommended.

Private health plans can no longer function in the future as they have in the past. Remaining a passive payer within the current health care system is not an option. In the past, health plans relied upon traditional benefit consultants and actuaries to advise the plan's administration concerning benefit design, rate setting and reserve requirements. Unfortunately, this experience based, financial approach to plan management has delivered inflationary trends that are consistently 3 to 5 times the overall rate of inflation.

Health plans are now adding medical consultant advisors to their administrative infrastructure. Illumination Medical assigns physicians and pharmacists that focus upon the evolving medical liabilities facing their health plan client.

Given the fact that the pharmacy lies at the core of quality health care today; and given the fact that the inflationary trend for the pharmacy benefit is not sustainable; the inclusion of a pharmacist in the consulting support for a health plan is indispensable for the future.