



New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

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TO: NYSCOPBA Chief Sector Stewards

FROM: Sharon Smith, Health Benefits Specialist

DATE: December 7, 2020

RE: Changes to the Empire Plan's Advance Flexible Formulary Taking Place Prior to or Outside the Annual Formulary Changes for 2021

NYSCOPBA has been notified of several additional changes to the Empire Plan Advance Flexible Formulary taking place prior to or outside of the annual formulary changes for 2021. Members affected by these changes have been or will be given the appropriate advance notice and CVS is helping them to obtain their medication at a different pharmacy when needed.

Icosapent, a generic for Vascepa (which is used to reduce risk of heart attack and stroke) has just been introduced to the market; however, it currently has very limited availability and may be unlikely available to most members. As a result, the Plan will cover the generic at Level 1, but due to limited availability, will keep the brand Vascepa on Level 2 without an ancillary charge in order to not disadvantage members who are unable to obtain the generic. As you know, when a generic launches, typically the brand moves to Level 3 and an ancillary charge is applied for members who want to keep taking the branded product without a medical exception. Once the generic is fully launched and is widely available, the brand Vascepa will be placed on Level 3 with an ancillary charge.

Effective April 1, 2021, CVS Specialty Pharmacy will no longer stock Botox. Botox is not on the Exclusive Specialty Drug List but members have been able to obtain the medication through the CVS Specialty Pharmacy. Botox will be available at retail pharmacies; therefore, CVS will inform members who currently obtain the medication through the CVS Specialty Pharmacy that starting in April, 2021, they will need to obtain the medication at a retail pharmacy.

Tobramycin, the newly launched high cost generic of Bethkis (Specialty Medication for Cystic Fibrosis, Level 2) will be excluded immediately and the brand Bethkis will be moved to Level 1 in a brand for generic switch. There are currently six utilizers on this generic (plan-wide). The information was included in the formulary change information for 2021; however, the generic launched sooner than expected and the brand for

generic switch was implemented immediately to prevent additional utilizer impact.

The FDA recently approved Sklice (ivermectin) lotion 0.5% to become nonprescription or over-the-counter (OTC). This is currently a non-preferred brand covered on Level 3 for the Flexible and Advance Flexible Formularies. When this drug officially becomes available over-the-counter, the product will begin to reject at the pharmacy as “OTC, Plan Exclusion” for Empire Plan Commercial enrollees. The pharmacy will advise any member of the rejection and indicate that the product can be purchased OTC. There is no current utilization of this drug.

A new drug to treat Spinal Muscle Atrophy, Evrydsi, has been launched. This is a specialty medication that CVS does not currently have access to dispense but is available through Accredo. This drug will not be listed on the Exclusive Specialty Drug List but appears on the updated Prior Authorization Drug List, and Specialty Guideline Management criteria has been put into place.

Effective December 22, 2020, CVS Specialty will no longer have access to dispense Inbrija, a drug used to treat Parkinson’s Disease. Only AllianceRX Walgreens Prime will have access to dispense this drug. There are currently six utilizers (plan-wide) of Inbrija and CVS is working with the manufacturer and AllianceRX Walgreens Prime to ensure the impacted utilizers remain on therapy. Current utilizers of Inbrija have been contacted by CVS to advise them of the change and assist them in switching their prescriptions to the AllianceRX Walgreens Prime pharmacy. Inbrija will no longer be listed on the Exclusive Specialty Drug List.

CVS has been updating the Empire Plan Exclusive Specialty List for 2021. Apparently, there were numerous medications on the list that should have had SGM/Specialty Guideline Management (prior authorization for Specialty drugs) criteria in place but did not; therefore, SGM is being added to those drugs for 2021. Specialty drugs that require SGM should be listed on the Prior Authorization Drug List and, if they also appear on the Flexible Formulary or Advanced Flexible Formulary list, should be listed with the SGM indication next to them. The addition of SGM requirements should be fairly seamless to members because CVS contacts the provider to get the information needed for the authorization; the member is not responsible for getting that information to CVS. Only in the rare case when a drug is being used for an inappropriate or off label indication might there be an issue for a member in getting their medication. CVS will be sending notification letters to utilizers by the end of December and adding overrides for existing utilizers of the newly SGM designated drugs through January, 2021. That will give them 30-days’ notice and ample time to deal with any SGM-related issues.

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Should you have any questions on this information, feel free to contact me.

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cc: NYSCOPBA Executive Board
NYSCOPBA Jt. Committee on Health Benefits