

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

June 24, 2003

Seniors Deserve Increased Quality

Quality Improvements in H.R. 2473, the "Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003"

Dear Colleague:

The quality of health services provided to Medicare beneficiaries would dramatically improve under H.R. 2473, the "Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003." The bill includes important expanded preventive benefits and increased coordination of care for beneficiaries.

Preventive Benefits:

- A free initial physical, so seniors are properly evaluated upon entering the program
- Cholesterol and blood lipid screenings
- No deductible for colorectal cancer screening tests

With these improved preventive benefits, serious illnesses could be detected earlier and treated more quickly.

Improved Drug Management and Compliance:

As part of the prescription drug benefit, drug management programs would be required that are designed to assure — for at-risk beneficiaries, such as those with diabetes, asthma, or congestive heart failure — that drugs appropriately optimize health outcomes and minimize the risk of adverse events. Such programs would be developed in cooperation with licensed pharmacists and physicians. Seniors would be able to receive medication management services and information through their local pharmacy.

Electronic prescribing will also be required under the drug benefit, in order to reduce errors and track the prescription regimens of Medicare beneficiaries. The electronic prescribing program would permit health professionals to access information on the different medications a senior may be taking — making it easier to prevent adverse drug interactions and side effects. In addition, electronic prescribing would cut down on both the costs and hassle that pharmacists incur trying to decipher a handwritten script. These systems will increase drug compliance and properly monitor drug utilization.

Chronic Care Management:

Medicare currently does not help seniors suffering from one or more chronic conditions — such as diabetes, asthma, or congestive heart failure — manage or coordinate their treatment effectively. H.R. 2473 provides chronic care management for all beneficiaries.

Chronic care management programs would provide:

- Coordination of care for multiple conditions
- Education and outreach to beneficiaries, providers, primary caregivers, and family members
- Coordination between health services and prescription drug benefits

These programs would ensure that beneficiaries do not receive duplicate tests or conflicting prescriptions, nor experience unnecessary hospitalizations.

I urge you to support these important health improvements when Medicare reform comes to the floor of the House for your consideration. For more information, please contact the Health Subcommittee staff at 5-3943.

Best regards,


Nancy L. Johnson
Chairman