

Pharmaceutical Companies Meet the Needs of the Poor and Uninsured: An Important Element in the Healthcare Safety Net

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"I am writing to say that I really appreciate the help you gave me in getting my medications. . . You may not realize how life-saving you are. . . I can never thank you all enough for helping me when I so desperately needed it."

— Excerpt from patient letter to GlaxoSmithKline

Our government spends hundreds of billions of dollars on healthcare entitlement programs every year, the largest programs being the federal Medicare program for senior citizens and the disabled; the federal/state Medicaid program for low-income patients; and the State Children's Health Insurance Program for children, up to age 19, who are not already insured. Despite the scope of these programs, there are many low-income people who do not qualify for any of them. These people depend on the complex and vast array of sometimes confusing public and private programs that make up the healthcare safety net.

As part of their commitment to improving access to medicines, pharmaceutical companies play an important and essential role in helping low-income, uninsured, and other vulnerable populations get the medicines they need as part of this safety net.

At GlaxoSmithKline, we do not want a lack of insurance coverage or financial means to put a patient at risk by causing them to either not fill a prescription or to fill it through unsafe channels. Thus we—like most other major pharmaceutical companies—offer programs designed to ensure that vulnerable populations get the prescription drugs they need.

Pharmaceutical Industry Patient Assistant Programs

More than six million patients across America received more than 22 million free or discounted medications with a wholesale value topping \$4.17 billion from pharmaceutical companies last year.¹ Expanded outreach efforts continue to increase use of these programs.

The industry also launched an innovative program that serves as a clearinghouse for the more than 275 public and private prescription assistance programs available. Augmenting these efforts, the industry's trade association, PhRMA, launched a new web site, www.pparx.org, making it much easier to learn about the many different public and private programs available and to identify ones that can help patients on an individual basis. These efforts are designed to increase awareness of and enrollment in existing programs.

As part of these efforts, GlaxoSmithKline's patient assistance programs, Bridges to Access and Commitment to Access™, provided over \$372 million worth of prescription medicines to eligible low-income, uninsured patients in the United States

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during 2004. In North Carolina alone, more than 25,900 patients received medicines worth nearly \$20 million from GlaxoSmithKline.² Importantly, GlaxoSmithKline's programs also provide a bridge for patients, offering coverage under the program during the time a patient applies to other programs, such as the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, where waiting lists and delays can often mean a long wait for the patient.

The success of GlaxoSmithKline's and the industry's programs are rooted in the local support of community health groups, physicians, and many others. Working together, these partnerships reach out to vulnerable individuals, conduct training sessions on enrollment, and spread the word that help exists for people who need it.

Discount Card Programs

Pharmaceutical company patient assistance programs are one important part of the safety net, but there is also help for patients who don't qualify for these programs due to income. Many pharmaceutical companies also offer free discount card programs through which qualified individuals can receive significant discounts on their medicines. A few programs are highlighted below.

Orange CardSM

GlaxoSmithKline introduced the Orange CardSM in 2001. It was the first such manufacturer discount card offering significant savings for low-income senior citizens. More than 175,000 seniors, including 13,000 North Carolina seniors, have an Orange CardSM. Through the Orange CardSM, qualifying seniors can get their GlaxoSmithKline medicines at a savings of about 20-40% off the usual price paid. To qualify, Medicare beneficiaries must have no public or private prescription drug insurance and have an income under \$30,000 for a single person or under \$40,000 for a couple.*

Together Rx CardTM

Soon after the launch of the Orange CardSM, seven pharmaceutical companies created the Together RxTM free prescription drug savings program. Together RxTM is a discount card through which the participating manufacturers offer savings of approximately 20-40% off their brand-name medicines. Patients can save on more than 155 FDA-approved medicines, and some pharmacies offer savings on generics as well. Medicare enrollees who have no other prescription drug coverage and earn

Resources for Drug Assistance

America's pharmaceutical companies want patients to be able to get the best and safest medicines available. For low-income patients there are a number of resources and programs available to help. Here are some web sites that provide information on programs and eligibility requirements:

HelpingPatients.org

www.helpingpatients.org

GSK Orange CardSM

www.OrangeCard.com

Together Rx CardTM

www.TogetherRx.com

Together Rx Access CardTM

www.TogetherRxAccess.com

Bridges to AccessTM

Bridgestoaccess.gsk.com

Commitment to AccessTM

commitmenttoaccess.gsk.com

Medicare

www.medicare.gov

less than \$28,000 (\$38,000 for couples) are eligible.[†]

Nearly 1.5 million seniors, including more than 75,000 North Carolina seniors, have a Together RxTM card, and to-date seniors have saved over \$700 million on their medicines.

Both the GlaxoSmithKline Orange CardSM and the Together RxTM card will be available until the Medicare prescription benefit takes effect in 2006.

Together Rx Access CardTM

The Orange CardSM and the Together RxTM card programs provide savings for low-income Medicare beneficiaries. Yet, there are millions of Americans who lack health insurance that don't qualify for Medicare. In January, GlaxoSmithKline and nine other major pharmaceutical companies introduced an innovative program to fill that gap and help many of those uninsured. The Together Rx Access CardTM helps Americans without prescription drug coverage better afford their medications by providing them with meaningful savings on many brand-name and generic products—at local pharmacies.

To be eligible, individuals must not be eligible for Medicare, have no prescription drug coverage (public or private), and

* Income limits may be different in Alaska and Hawaii; GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) expects Orange CardSM participants to realize out-of-pocket savings ranging from 20-40% of the price individuals without drug coverage would usually pay their pharmacies for GSK medicines. Actual savings will vary depending on a pharmacy's customary pricing for a specific GSK medicine. GSK offers Orange CardSM participants direct savings on their outpatient GSK prescription medicines equal to 25% of our wholesale list price. See application for important details and limitations.

† This program is for Medicare enrollees who have an annual income that is less than \$28,000/singles (\$38,000/couples) and do not have prescription drug coverage (public or private); this range of savings reflects the savings presently offered. Savings may vary depending on a pharmacy's customary pricing for a specific medicine and the savings offered by the participating company that makes it. (Participating companies independently set the level of savings offered and drugs included in the program. Those decisions are subject to change.) Income limits may be different in Alaska and Hawaii.

have a household income equal to or less than \$30,000 for a single person, \$40,000 for a family of two, or \$50,000 for a family of three.[‡] Participants can expect to save about 25-40%—and sometimes more—off the usual pharmacy price paid on these prescription products. More than 275 FDA-approved prescription products, as well as a wide range of generics, from 10 major pharmaceutical companies are included in the program, including dozens of medicines used to treat diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, cancer, allergies, asthma, arthritis, and depression, which are among the most common conditions affecting Americans. Together Rx Access™ could benefit approximately 80% of the 45 million Americans—including more than eight million children—who are uninsured and don't have prescription drug coverage.

Ninety-eight percent of pharmacies nationwide will accept the Together Rx Access™ Card. The goal of the Together Rx Access Card™ is to help the millions of Americans without prescription drug coverage gain access to the prescription products they need and to help them take care of what's most important—their health. Since January, Together Rx Access™ has enrolled more than 300 uninsured North Carolinians.

Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit

One of the most important recent efforts to increase access to healthcare was the enactment by Congress of a Medicare prescription drug benefit. Enrollment for the Medicare prescription drug benefit begins in November 2005, and it is an important

change in the nation's healthcare safety net. Beginning in 2006, Medicare beneficiaries will have access to a benefit that will cover outpatient prescription drugs. The benefit will be administered by private prescription drug plans, and seniors will have a choice of which plans to join. The new program is especially beneficial to low-income patients. They will get full coverage with minimal copays and will not have to pay premiums or deductibles. Every low-income senior citizen should take advantage of the new Medicare prescription drug benefit. Also, seniors with high prescription drug costs can benefit from the catastrophic coverage offered under the new benefit.

Until the prescription drug benefit goes into effect, there are Medicare prescription drug discount cards available. These cards offer discounts on prescription drugs and can charge a premium. But again, for low-income seniors, these cards are a great deal. Qualifying low-income seniors can get a card with up to \$600 already available for them to use toward the purchase of prescription drugs.

Conclusion

Lack of access to even basic medication and healthcare facilities is a situation nobody should experience. GlaxoSmithKline recognizes the importance of our nation's healthcare safety net and is committed to playing a role in helping people avoid this crisis. No single organization can produce a solution; we will continue to work with other stakeholders to improve the health of our nation and improve our healthcare system. **NCMJ**

‡ Savings may vary depending on the pharmacy's customary pricing for each product and savings offered by the participating company that makes it. Participating companies independently set the level of savings offered and the products included in the program. Those decisions are subject to change. Income limits may be different in Alaska and Hawaii.

REFERENCES

- 1 "Record Number of Patients Receive Assistance From America's Pharmaceutical Companies," PhRMA press release, February 22, 2005. Available at www.phrma.org.
- 2 WAC (wholesale acquisition costs) is GlaxoSmithKline's listed price to wholesalers and warehousing chains, not including prompt pay, stocking or distribution allowance, or other discounts, rebates, or chargebacks. The listed price may not represent prices charged to other customers, including specialty distributors.