

STATEMENT



Statement in Opposition to Kansas Senate Bill 123

February 5, 2015

Position: The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America respectfully opposes legislation in Kansas that would remove the protection for mental health medicines. Adding this class to the PDL could prevent vulnerable patients from accessing the treatment they need.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) opposes all efforts to remove the protected status of mental health drugs because it would create significant access issues for patients and their families who are suffering with mental illness.

The long standing protections for mental health medications in Kansas ensure that patients have access to a wide range of medically necessary mental health drugs such as anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, mood stabilizers, and anti-anxiety agents. These protections were put in place specifically because the populations of people in need of these therapies are more fragile than those that suffer from many other diseases. In addition, mental illness is often a byproduct of chronic disease so this proposed policy would impact a significant population.

When it comes to mental health patients, adherence is the real cost saver. Mental health patients have more trouble with adherence than patients with other types of disease. Thus, efforts to maintain compliance become more important. Due to the nature of mental illness, the costs associated with non-compliance reach far beyond the health care arena and out into society by increasing costs for employers and families. A recent Health Affairs study by Goetzel showed a high risk for depression led the list as one of the most expensive conditions for employers. For example, annual medical expenditures for an employee with depression were \$2,185 higher—or 48 percent more—than for a worker without depression. Enhancing adherence practices can reduce overall medical costs by avoiding more expensive medical care such as hospitalization, emergency room visits, and long term care. Thus, it is important to maintain open access to all drugs in the therapeutic classes that would be restricted by this legislation.

A patient's health and well-being and preserving the physician-patient decision-making authority should be the focal point for all decisions regarding drug treatment regimens, especially for those with mental illness. Patients whose treatment is decided based on cost alone may not receive the best treatment for them and may consequently require significantly more costly treatment in the short- and long-term, including hospital stays and emergency room visits. In addition, inadequate treatment that restricts the provider's ability to ensure their patient gets the medicine that they need can also have devastating consequences.

Ensuring that patients prescribed atypical anti-psychotics, anti-depressants, and other psychotropic medications in the therapeutic class are able to access these medications, without restriction, is an important step in keeping overall healthcare costs down in the state.

For these reasons, PhRMA opposes the removal of the mental health protected status proposed in this legislation and urges the Kansas legislature to maintain unrestricted access to mental health medications.

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