

## COUNSELING PEOPLE WHO TAKE AN ANTIPSYCHOTIC, ANTICONVULSANT, OR ANTIDEPRESSANT






### Did you know?



Medicare Part D covers three classes of drugs commonly used to treat mental illnesses: antipsychotics, anticonvulsants, and antidepressants. Physicians may prescribe these same classes of drugs for other health issues as well.

Insurance companies may categorize these drug classes in the highest tier with substantial co-payments. Some drugs in these three classes are very powerful and are prescribed in low doses. Other, less potent drugs are prescribed at higher doses. The amount of drug a person needs to take varies based on how ill they are, their age, their metabolism, and their physical condition (*National Institute of Mental Health, Medications, [www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/medicate.cfm](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/medicate.cfm)*).

**If you learn that someone is taking one of these classes of drugs, you need to be mindful of certain ways you can help him or her.**

-  **Check the prescribed dosage of the medication against the plan's covered dosage.** The prescribed dosage could be higher than that covered by the person's plan. Discuss the plan's exceptions process so the person you are counseling can obtain access to that dose, if necessary. Guide people through materials concerning the exceptions process (see <http://www.medicare.gov/> or <http://www1.nmha.org/federal/MedicarePartD-FAQExceptionAppeals.pdf>).
-  **Help people develop contingency plans to cover problems with filling prescriptions.** Difficulties with getting prescriptions filled at the pharmacy can trigger anxiety and distress. Bringing a copy of the plan formulary can assist the provider in prescribing covered medications. Or ask people whether they have a number to call, such as for their mental health provider, if issues arise. They could also ask their doctors for samples to carry them over until their prescription can be filled.
-  **Make sure people understand the cost implications of their prescription.** Costs for these drugs will add up over time. Check a drug's tier in the plan, and calculate potential co-payments over a year.
-  **Learn about alternative funding sources.** People with limited income may be able to get extra help paying for their prescriptions by filling out an application on the Social Security Administration website ([www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)) or calling 1-800-772-1213. State or private wraparound programs as well as charitable organizations may also be able to help.
-  **Explain step therapy.** In step therapy, a patient is required to progress through a series of medications that may be more appropriate for the patient's diagnosis. Often the drugs are less expensive, but they could also be a better alternative to other options, as proven by clinical studies.