

Part D Drug Spending Dashboard

Methodology

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Background

The Part D Drug Spending Dashboard is an interactive, web-based tool that presents spending information for Medicare Part D drugs - drugs patients generally administer themselves and that are paid through the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug program. Part D drug information is available from the Part D Prescription Drug Event (PDE) data, which are available for a subset of Medicare beneficiaries who choose to enroll in Part D (which represents approximately 70% of Medicare beneficiaries). The Dashboard focuses on average spending per dosage unit and change in average spending per dosage unit over time. The tool also displays spending information for manufacturer(s) of the drugs as well consumer-friendly information of drug uses and clinical indications.

Part D PDE records were summarized by drug by linking National Drug Codes (NDCs) available in the PDE data to a commercially available database and aggregated across all strengths, dosage forms, and routes of administration to the drug brand name and generic name. All Part D organization and plan types are included, while over-the-counter drugs in the PDE data are excluded as well as NDCs with fewer than 50 claims in the current (2016) or previous year (2015). In addition, NDCs with large variations in reported units from year to year were reviewed on a case-by-case basis and data anomalies were excluded. Since 5-year trend information is presented, any drug information in years prior to 2015 with fewer than 11 claims have been redacted.

Drug Metrics

Drug spending metrics for Part D drugs are based on the gross drug cost, which includes ingredient cost, dispensing fees, sales tax, and applicable vaccine administration fees. Part D drug spending represents total spending for the prescription claim, including amounts paid by the Medicare Part D plan and beneficiary payments. The Part D spending metrics do not reflect any manufacturers' rebates or other price concessions as CMS is prohibited from publicly disclosing such information. However, high-level [rebate summary](#) information is available for 2014.

The Part D Drug Spending Dashboard focuses on average spending per dosage unit and change in average spending per dosage unit over time. Dosage units refer to the drug products in the form in which they are marketed for use, e.g. number of tablets, grams, milliliters or other units. Units include the specific mixture of active ingredients and inactive components, the particular configuration (such as a capsule shell), and the method/route of administration for a particular dose. Multiple dosage units may exist for a particular drug, since different medical conditions can warrant different routes of administration.

Since drugs are available in multiple strengths and dosage forms, the average spending per dosage unit at the brand name and generic name level is weighted to account for variation in claims volume for specific brand name, generic name, strength, dosage form, routes of administration, and manufacturer levels. The overall brand name/generic name claim weighted spending per unit is calculated by first summarizing each drug to specific strength, form, route of administration, and manufacturer levels. For each unique level, spending is divided by the number of units and multiplied by its proportion of total claims, so that claims volume becomes the weight. The claim weighted average spending per dosage unit at the overall brand name/generic name level is then calculated by summarizing across the strength, form, route, and manufacturer levels. A similar approach was used to calculate average spending per unit for specific manufacturers.

Drug Metric Definitions

- Average Spending per Dosage Unit: Part D drug spending divided by the number of dosage units, which is weighted by the proportion of total claims.
- Change in Average Spending per Dosage Unit: the percent change in average spending per dosage unit from the prior year.
- Annual Growth Rate in Average Spending per Dosage Unit: the constant average change in spending per dosage unit over the most recent five years of data availability, calculated using the compound annual growth rate (CAGR).
- Total Spending: aggregate drug spending for the Part D program during the benefit year.
- Total Beneficiaries: number of Medicare Part D beneficiaries utilizing the drug during the benefit year.
- Average Spending per Beneficiary: total Part D drug spending divided by the number of unique beneficiaries utilizing the drug during the benefit year.

Additional drug metrics, with their definitions, are available in the data tables that are available for [download](#).

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