



A SIGN OF THE TIMES

INDIVIDUAL FAMILY PLANS

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE RX PLANS

Maybe you haven't had the opportunity to notice lately but there is a definite trend within the Medical Insurance Industry as it applies to the prescription drug plans. This trend appears to extend across most Individual Family Plans offered by all the major health insurance carriers.

No longer do we see the traditional approach of X dollars co-pay for generic prescriptions and Y dollars for brand named prescriptions. Now we find a separate annual brand name drug deductible of up to \$500. for the prescription drug portion of your medical Individual Family Plan. This is most likely in addition to other deductibles that may apply to the plan. We are also seeing this type deductible, typically a \$250. deductible, on the top end plans too. It seems as though none of the plans are deductible free any longer.

The prescription benefit of your Individual Family Plan used to be a deciding factor in selecting a plan, especially if you used brand name prescriptions. This is much less the case today. Serious consideration is now being given to generic only plans. The cost savings of these type plans can and is significant when compared to the comprehensive Rx plans.

Many brand named prescriptions are now available in generic form. And those that aren't, can often be successfully substituted by your physician. Generic prescription's bad reputation has now been overcome with relevant studies and facts that show generic pharmaceuticals are not weak wannabes. The Internet has also made individuals "smart" informed consumers who no longer believe that only a brand named drug will do or newer brand named drugs are more effective than their generic well tested and proven substitutes.

Consumers can now quickly shop for the best buys on pharmaceuticals. Mail order pharmacies are now well accepted and recommended by many insurance carriers. Add to that the new Walmart's, Costco's, K-Mart and other major non-traditional retailers who are entering the discount pharmacy business and we find an entirely new prescription marketplace at hand.

How should new and old consumers deal with this new trend? The first step is to become an informed consumer. If you take brand named drugs find out if there are generic alternatives. If there are not, ask your physician if there is a generic equivalent available. If there is, ask your doctor to start writing. If not and a generic is not advisable, then start shopping and find out where you can get the best buy. Purchase in bulk, a 90-day supply, if this is a maintenance drug or one that you will be taking for a period of time. Your doctor can write you a bulk prescription for a 90-day supply with X number of refills. Your mail order pharmacies deal with these types of prescriptions on a daily basis. Lastly, figure out how much you will pay on an annual basis for your brand name prescription. Then figure in the deductible and increased premiums and, see if it makes sense to go that way or to just pay for it out of pocket while saving dollars by selecting a less costly generic only medical plan.

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