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New Prime Therapeutics Study Bolsters Evidence that Extended Supply Improves Drug Adherence among Chronically Ill

SAN DIEGO, CALIF., April 9, 2010 – A new study presented today at the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy's 22nd Annual Meeting by Prime Therapeutics (Prime), a thought-leader in pharmacy benefit management, provides new evidence to support an easy, low-cost way to help keep patients with chronic conditions on their medications: provide them with a three-month drug supply.¹ With clinical research demonstrating the link between adherence and health outcomes for many chronic diseases, this study has important implications for patients, employers and health insurers seeking better health and decreased overall health care costs.

The study, co-authored by Prime and one of its Blue Cross and Blue Shield clients, found that patients who received their medications in 90-day supplies rather than every 30 days, were 40 percent less likely to have adherence problems—meaning they continue to follow their doctor's prescribed drug regimen—than those who received 30-day supplies. Researchers compared adherence rates for patients filling a 90-day supply at a local pharmacy or by mail service to patients filling a 30-day supply at their local pharmacy. Patients were taking medications to treat three common chronic conditions—high blood pressure, diabetes or high cholesterol.

Chronic disease now accounts for about 75 percent of the more than \$2 trillion spent on health care each year in the United States, and these three conditions are among the largest contributors to this growing problem. Today, only about half of all U.S. patients take their medications as prescribed by their physician.² Growing clinical research shows that patient adherence with prescribed drug therapy is critical to mitigating the toll these chronic diseases take on Americans' health and finances.

"Our study found extended supply patients showed an adherence rate that was from 7 to 10 percentage points higher, depending on the type of medication and follow-up period," said Pat Gleason, PharmD, FCCP, BCPS, Director of Clinical Outcomes Assessment with Prime, who co-authored the study. "This increased adherence is important because these medications have been shown to significantly reduce complications and hospitalizations."

Previous research has indicated that patients who receive extended supplies of their medication through the mail were more likely to stick with their drug regimens than those who receive their medication from a local retail pharmacy on a monthly basis.³ It was unclear, however, whether the determining factor was the delivery method (home versus retail) or the extended supply. This new study found that extended supply was the key factor, since there was little difference in adherence rates between patients who received their extended supplies through the mail or from a drug store. In addition, the study followed patients for one-and-a-half years compared with one year or less in previous studies.

"The added convenience as well as the member cost savings often associated with 90-day supply are likely key factors in the improved adherence," said David Lassen, PharmD, Chief Clinical Officer, VP Clinical Services. "The results suggest that plan sponsors looking to increase adherence should consider adding a 90-day supply option to their pharmacy benefit as a component to their strategy. If 90-day supply is already offered, plan sponsors should consider further promoting extended supply to members through benefit design and education."

The published study abstract can be found in the March 2010 issue of the Journal of Managed Care Pharmacy at <http://www.amcp.org/data/jmcp/141-168.pdf>.

Sources

¹Hermes M, et al. Adherence to Chronic Medication Therapy Associated with 90-Day Supplies Compared with 30-Day Supplies. J Manag Care Pharm 2010;16:141-142.

²Orszag, P. Congressional Budget Office Testimony: Growth in Health Care Costs. Delivered before the Committee on the Budget, United States Senate, January 31, 2008. <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/89xx/doc8948/01-31-HealthTestimony.pdf>

³Cox E, Mager D. Is Compliance Really Better in Home Delivery? Evidence Across Three Chronic Therapy Classes. September 2008. Published on line at <http://www.express-scripts.com/industryresearch/outcomes/onlinepublications/study/homeDeliveryCompliance.pdf>

Prime Therapeutics is a pharmacy benefit management company dedicated to providing innovative, clinically-based, cost-effective pharmacy solutions for clients and members. Providing pharmacy benefit services nationwide to approximately 14.7 million covered lives, its client base includes Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans, employer and union groups, and third-party administrators. Headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota, Prime Therapeutics is collectively owned by 12 Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans, subsidiaries or affiliates of those Plans. Learn more at www.primetherapeutics.com.

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