11-1-2005

A stepwise guide to selecting a Medicare prescription drug plan

Joseph A. Woelfel
University of the Pacific, jwoelfel@pacific.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/phs-facarticles

Part of the Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
http://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/phs-facarticles/63

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences Faculty Articles by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.
A Stepwise Guide to Selecting a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

The difficult part of the new Medicare Part D drug plan is knowing if it will benefit you and what you should do. The information in this handout will help you to begin to know what’s best. You can use this guide yourself or have someone help you. It requires that you or someone you know have a computer with internet access.

Please complete each step to help you decide what’s best for you.

### A. Are You Eligible for Medicare Part D?

Yes, if you’re:
- over 65
- or permanently disabled and under 65
- or have end-stage kidney disease
- or already have Medicare Part A (Medicare hospital insurance) coverage
- or already have Medicare Part B (Medicare medical insurance) coverage.

□ Yes □ No

If you answered yes to any of these questions you are most likely eligible for the Standard Medicare Part D coverage described in Section B. If you answered no to any of the questions above you may qualify for extra help above what standard coverage provides. The BenefitsCheckUpRx website, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration on Aging, will give you personal recommendations about your situation and what steps you should consider. This website provides a variety of fact sheets, forms, and worksheets. It also links to plans available in your area described in Section C and the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder described in Section D. Having the following information available before you go to the website will make it easier to complete the online questionnaire:

- State and ZIP code
- Date of birth
- Types of public benefits, insurance coverage, and prescription drug savings programs you currently receive such as:
  - state Medicaid
  - Medicare Advantage (MA)
  - Medigap (supplemental insurance) policy
  - drug coverage from an employer, union, or retiree plan
  - drug coverage from the Department of Defense (TRICARE), The Department of Veterans Affairs, or the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program
- Current income and assets from all sources for self and spouse
- Number of prescription drugs taken
• Approximate out-of-pocket dollar amount paid for prescription drugs.

Once you have this information, go to the BenefitsCheckUpRx website at:
https://ssl2.benefitscheckup.org/frmwelcome2.cfm?cfid=2016238&cftoken=13919082&source_id=1&prev_id=91660&org_id=0&partner_id=12&subset_id=14&language_id=EN&access_id=0&client_id=NULL&user_id=NULL&test_id=0

B. For Standard Medicare Part D Coverage:

Here’s what you will generally pay for standard coverage:

a. Yearly deductible of $250 (This may be lower depending on the prescription drug plan you choose).

b. Monthly plan premium averaging about $32. (This monthly premium also varies by the plan chosen and the area you live in).

c. 25% co-pay for plan covered drugs after the annual deductible of $250 is paid up to the next $2,000 in covered drug expense (this can be as much as $500 that you might pay and as much as $1,500 that Medicare might pay).

d. Once the drug expense, that you and Medicare pay, reaches $2,250, then the next $2,850 in covered drug expense must be paid entirely by you (you pay 100% of this next $2,850). You may hear this expense called the “donut hole.”

e. After that amount is paid, your “out-of-pocket” threshold (called TrOOP) has been met.

f. Now, you pay only $5.00 for covered brand drugs, $2.00 for covered generic drugs, or 5% of the covered drug cost, whichever is more.

C. What Medicare Prescription Plans Are Available Where You Live?

The answer to this question depends on which state or area of the country you live in.

To help you determine which plan or plans are available for you, please follow the stepwise directions below:

Step 1. On a computer, go to the Medicare website at:
http://www.medicare.gov/medicarereform/map.asp

Step 2. Find your state shown on the list.

Step 3. Select either “Medicare Advantage Plans” or “Stand-Alone Drug Plans.”

Step 4. A landscape list of available plans is displayed that includes information on premiums, deductible amounts, type of additional coverage offered, tiered co-payment options, and availability of mail order prescriptions.
D. What Medicare Prescription Plans Meet Your Personal Needs?

You can answer this question by going to the new *Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder*. This tool will help you find and compare prescription drug plans that have the prescription drugs you currently take and those that meet your personal needs. It will also allow you to enroll in the plan you select.

Please follow the stepwise directions below:

**Step 1.** If you have a Medicare insurance card, have it ready, and on a computer, go to the Medicare Plan Finder website at:  
http://www.medicare.gov/MPDPF/Public/Include/DataSection/Questions/Questions.asp

**Step 2.** Follow the stepwise directions Medicare shows.

**Helpful Notes for You:**

- You can begin enrollment on November 15, 2005.
- You should enroll before May 15, 2006 to avoid paying a premium penalty.
- Be sure to check if you have medical conditions that haven’t been treated. These can affect you prescription expenses and whether or not to enroll in a Medicare Part D plan.
- Once you join a plan, you will be able to switch to another plan after a year.
- For more information on Medicare Part D, call 1-800-MEDICARE or go to:  
www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn.drugcoverage.asp.