



Ohio Association of Rheumatology Legislative Newsletter September 2017

STATE UPDATES

OAR Annual Meeting Highlights Advocacy

The Ohio Association of Rheumatology's Annual meeting in Columbus kicked off their sessions with an advocacy update and discussed the importance of members getting involved in the issues.

The President of OAR, Dr. Stephanie Ott, led the discussion that included a recap of the OAR Advocacy Day in May, battling CGS downcoding, discussed efforts to support patient access legislation, future issues and how rheumatologists can get help advocate for their patients and their practices.

The program continued to focus on advocacy throughout the morning sessions. Dr. Michael Schweitz, Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO) Federal Advocacy Chair, gave a talk on PBMs and their hidden role within the supply chain. Ohio State Medical Society (OSMA) liaison Reginald Fields and American College of Rheumatology (ACR) representative Dr. Edward Herzig updated attendees on legislative accomplishments in the state and the issues rheumatologists are facing at the federal level.



Step Therapy – Where We Stand



Over 50 patient and provider organizations are supporting the step therapy legislation in Ohio. The Ohio Step Therapy Coalition met last week in Columbus for a fall advocacy day that they hope would be the last big push needed to move the legislation forward.

Senate Bill 56 currently resides in the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee where it is awaiting a vote. The committee is chaired by State Senator Dave Burke, who is a practicing pharmacist in Marysville, Ohio.

Senator Burke has stated numerous times to advocates that he does not believe that this is an issue because he has not heard from enough patients that have fallen victim to this common practice. OAR advocates refuted this claim back in May during the joint advocacy day with the Arthritis Foundation when over 20 patients from around Ohio told their story to legislators.

OAR believes this legislation can move forward this fall but not without the help of our members throughout the state. The more patients that can tell their story the better chance we have at correcting the misuse of this egregious payer tactic.

[TAKE ACTION – Ohioans for Step Therapy Reform](#)

[Take Action Step Therapy Document](#)

OAR Strongly OPPOSES Issue 2



On November 7th Ohioans will face a ballot question known as Issue 2. This initiative sounds like a commonsense solution to combat high drug pricing, but when put under the microscope this issue could have negative consequences for all Ohioans, including our veterans. The OAR strongly opposes this question and encourages everyone to seriously consider the potential negative impact this statute would have on all of Ohio's patients.

Issue 2 would require the state and state agencies, including the Ohio Department of Medicaid, to pay the same or lower prices for prescriptions drugs as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)—a department that negotiates drug prices with companies and typically pays 20 to 24 percent less than other agencies for prescription drugs.

A **YES** vote supports this measure to require state agencies and programs to purchase prescription drugs at prices no higher than what the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pays for them.

A **NO** vote opposes this measure to require state agencies and programs to purchase prescription drugs at prices no higher than what the VA pays for them.

[OAR Issue 2 Brief](#)

FEDERAL UPDATES

OAR Signs onto Letters to CMS

OAR and a number of state societies signed onto the Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations comments that were submitted to CMS in response to proposed revisions for 2018.

[Medicare Physician Fee Schedule \(MPFS\), Medicare Shared Savings Program Requirements, and the Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program \(CMS-1676-P\).](#)

[CY 2018 Updates to the Quality Payment Program](#)

Anthem Threatens Hyaluronic Acid Injections Treatment Coverage for Patients

Anthem has announced that, effective October 1, 2017, Hyaluronan injections to treat osteoarthritis in the knee will be revised from medically necessary to not medically necessary. Any patients carrying an Anthem - sponsored health plan will no longer have their Hyaluronan injections covered, and must elect to pay the entire cost out-of-pocket in order to continue receiving this treatment.

Numerous studies have confirmed the safety and efficacy of Hyaluronan injections in treating osteoarthritis of the knee, which are clinically meaningful for patients. In addition, Hyaluronan injections have proven to reduce overall resource utilization by osteoarthritis patients, delaying TKR and reducing use of NSAIDs, corticosteroids, and opioids.

The American College of Rheumatology (ACR) and the Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO) are currently finalizing comments that the OAR will review and consider supporting.

[Anthem Clinical UM Guideline](#)

Advocates Supporting Federal Step Therapy Legislation

A congressional effort to improve patients' access to treatment is generating widespread enthusiasm in the advocacy community. Sponsored by Rep. Brad Wenstrup, DPM, (R-Ohio) and Rep. Raul Ruiz, MD, (D-Calif.), the Restoring the Patient's Voice Act of 2017 is a first-of-its-kind bill that protects patients' ability to access the medications their doctor prescribes.

The bill tackles step therapy, a cost-cutting technique whereby insurers require patients to fail on an inexpensive treatment preferred by the health plan before getting the medication prescribed.

[Full Article](#)

As always, OAR legislative staff will continue to monitor all relevant legislation and will update OAR membership as required.