

THE Medicine Cabinet

A newsletter from MEDPIN – Medicine For People In Need

Volume 1 Issue 2
February 2002

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Medpin
Medicine for people in need

First Annual Medpin Conference: Looking Back, Looking Ahead at Providing Medicine for Californians in Need

DATE: Friday, May 3, 2002
TIME: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Oakland Airport Hilton

Featured presenters include:
Sharon Levine, MD, Associate Executive Director, Kaiser Permanente
Jim Mitchell, Director, U.S. Office of Pharmaceutical Affairs,
Dennis Scott, MD, Director, Volunteers in Health Care (includes RxAssist)
California Safety Net Clinic managers and clinicians sharing their pharmacy management expertise
Retail Pharmacists working with safety net clinics to dispense 340B drugs

Looking back and Looking Ahead Celebrate - In its first two years, Medpin's PIC - Drug Distribution Project (DDP) has distributed \$100 million worth of prescription medications to safety net clinics throughout California.

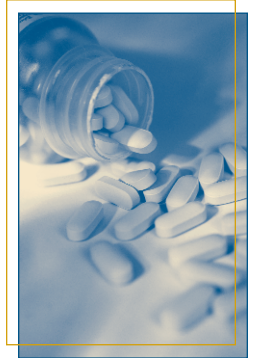
Future Directions - We'll look at the lessons we've learned and discuss future directions and opportunities to maximize

access to free and discounted drugs. In addition, we'll identify strategies to educate key opinion leaders in local and state government on the critical issues of pharmacy costs and access to care. We'll also consider how we can work most effectively with the pharmaceutical industry to improve access to free and low cost medications.

Who should attend?

Leaders from safety net community clinics, county health systems, university schools of pharmacy, pharmacists, physicians and other health care providers involved in providing medicine for people in need.

Conference workshops will provide an opportunity for safety net clinicians and managers to share their expertise in reducing pharmacy costs and optimizing high quality health care for California's most vulnerable populations. Check the website for registration details.



Coming to Medpin Website Soon: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Expansion



When we first started the Drug Distribution Project (DDP), clinics were eagerly looking for information.

In response, we created a PIC Drug Distribution Project frequently asked questions (FAQs) section on the Medpin website.

Now, we are adding new FAQs to our website. Do you want to know about purchasing "best buys," or participating in the 340B Drug Pricing Program? How to contract with a retail pharmacy to dispense 340B drugs? Answers to these questions and more will be available soon in the Free and Low Cost Drugs section of the Medpin website.

Learning About Generic Drugs

Dial in to Medpin's Next Conference Call Training

How can your clinic reduce drug costs without compromising quality of care?

One way is to increase utilization of generic drugs. Learn from the experts about the safety and efficacy of generic drugs and how your clinic can educate providers and patients on the value of using generic drugs.

DATE:

Tuesday, March 19, 2002

TIME:

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

COST:

No charge to non-profits

To register email
vevans@medpin.org

Telephone Conference Call CDs Available

If you missed the call on Contracting With a Retail Pharmacy to Dispense 340B Drugs, you can listen to the CD! To order a free single copy of the CD, email vevans@medpin.org.

CDs are also available for the calls on Patient Assistance Programs and on Using Drug Samples.

Thanks to APHCV of Los Angeles, and Abraham Ferrer, photographer, for the photo to the right.

Medicine Cabinet Launches "Rx for Wellness"

Medpin knows that taking prescribed medicine is often an important part—but only part—of effective steps to improve and maintain good health. This edition launches what will be a regular part of The Medicine Cabinet, a new feature aimed at reminding us that “the best medicine” is often NOT just a prescription drug, but may involve behavior changes with or without medication. Rx for Wellness will summarize material appearing in respected health-information publications such as the *University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter*. We welcome your comments on this new feature and suggestions for future topics. For more information on the U.C. Berkeley Wellness Letter, see www.wellnessletter.com.

Medications and Diabetes

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently released a study that included more than 3000 Americans at high risk for developing Type II diabetes, divided into three study groups. One group received supportive counseling and follow-up to help them create and maintain healthy life-style habits—a low fat diet and moderate daily exercise. The second group took the drug currently used to treat diabetes: Metformin, twice a day. The third group was given placebo pills.

Results? As summarized in the November 2001 issue of the U.C. Berkeley Wellness Letter, “Metformin (brand name Glucophage), may have some use in the prevention of diabetes, but it isn’t as effective as diet, exercise, and weight loss.” For more information on the study, “Diet and Exercise Dramatically Delay Type II Diabetes”, go to www.nih.gov/news/pr/aug2001/niddk-08.htm

HELP Safety Net Clinics Connect with Pharmacists

Do you know of a pharmacist who might want to serve as a Consultant Pharmacist to a safety net clinic? Is there a nearby retail pharmacy that might want to contract with your clinic or others to dispense 340B drugs? please email maslin@medpin.org the pharmacists’ contact information.

The Medpin regional workshops are a great opportunity for pharmacists to learn about indigent care pharmacy issues. In addition, at Medpin’s First Annual Conference on May 3 we will offer a program (with CEUs) for pharmacists on Becoming A Consultant Pharmacist For California Safety Net Providers.

Drug Distribution Project Looks to its Final Year

Medpin’s Drug Distribution Project (DDP) recently completed its final Order Period for Program Year 2, sending \$60 million worth of orders from more than 150 participating safety net clinics in California to participating pharmaceutical companies. These companies are shipping brand name drugs at no cost to community clinics, county health systems, and other California safety providers participating in the DDP. In addition to the nineteen major drug companies already participating, the DDP is pleased to welcome six new participant companies offering a total of \$23 million of their brand name drugs: G.D. Searle, Hoechst Marion Roussel, Novartis, Roche Laboratories, Ortho-McNeil and Janssen.



Asian Pacific Health Care Venture

The DDP begins its final program year on April 1, 2002. If your community or county clinic operates a pharmacy or dispensary licensed by the California Board of Pharmacy and has not yet signed up to receive no-cost drugs for indigent patients, click on the PIC Drug Distribution Project button on Medpin’s website to get more information. This unique and valuable project (sometimes compared to individual drug companies’ indigent drug programs)

has provided great benefit to California indigent patients with a maximum of simplicity and “user friendliness” for clinic staff. **NOTE: New participants will be accepted ONLY until March 1, 2002.**

Using a Federal Discount Program to Bring Your Pharmacy Costs Down

In the past five years, drug expenditures have grown two to four times faster than other health care service costs. Californians spent \$9.3 billion dollars on prescription medications in 1999 compared to \$7.8 billion in 1998. This represents a nearly 20% increase.

The combination of increasing utilization of drugs and the increasing costs of drugs, particularly the newer brand name drugs, contributes to escalating costs. As the population ages, more people are using daily medications to manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. Multiple drug regimens are now used to treat many conditions that used to be managed with a single drug. For example, a person with Type II diabetes may be taking one medication to stimulate the pancreas to produce insulin, another medication to decrease liver production of glucose and a third drug to increase insulin sensitivity.

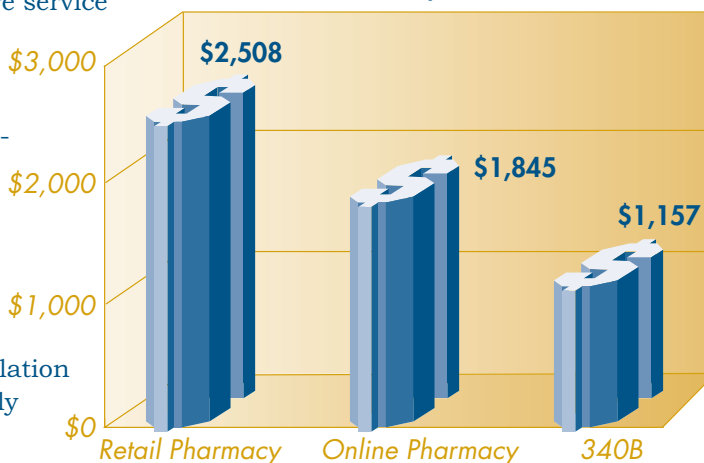
What's a clinic to do?

Clinics will need to implement a variety of approaches to reduce pharmacy costs. Foremost, for those clinics that are eligible, is accessing the Public Health Service 340B Drug Pricing Program. Enactment of SB340 (California Statutes of 2001) offers some California community and county clinics new opportunities for purchasing drugs at significant discounts through the 340B program.

What savings can the clinic expect?

Purchasing through the 340B Drug Pricing Program can reduce pharmaceutical expenditures between 25% - 50%. To look at some specific examples, Medpin selected twenty top selling drugs and priced them at a California retail pharmacy, an online pharmacy and at 340B prices. As the chart illustrates, the total costs for this "market basket" were strikingly different.

Top 20 Market Basket Total Costs
January, 2002



NOTE: All Prices displayed in this chart are approximate and provided only for general comparison.

How do I find out if my clinic is eligible to participate in the 340B Drug Pricing Program?

Contact the Office of Pharmacy Affairs at (800) 628-6279 or www.hrsa.gov/odpp.

How can I learn more about the 340B Drug Pricing Program?

Attend one of Medpin's Regional Training Workshops on Reducing Pharmacy Costs.

Reducing Pharmacy Costs Workshop—Dates and Location

Workshops will be held from 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Lunch is included. The registration fee is \$35 and \$15 for each additional participant from the same organization

Tues., Feb. 5	Los Angeles – Sportsmen's Lodge
Thurs., Feb. 7	San Diego – Best Western Island Palms
Thurs., Feb. 28	Sacramento – Hilton at Arden Way
Thurs., Mar. 7	Fresno – Piccadilly Inn University

You can register online at the Medpin website: www.medpin.org

Best Buys

for February 2002

Fluoxetine 20 mg.
(generic Prozac)
#100—\$49.71
49084-0735-01

Diazepam 5 mg.
(generic Valium)
#100—\$1.49
00228-2052-10

Atenolol 50 mg.
(generic Tenormin)
#100—\$0.89
00781-1506-01

Glyburide 5 mg.
(generic Micronase)
#100—\$3.66
0009-9364-01

Diprosone Cream
45 gm.—\$0.01
0085-0853-03

Looking to Buy a "Best Buy"?

We don't sell or distribute any drugs; you must work with a drug wholesaler or directly with a pharmaceutical company to buy drugs at the Best Buy prices—or any other prices! If you're looking to purchase drugs at the prices stated in our "Best Buy" sections, come to **Medpin's Reducing Pharmacy Costs workshops now taking place.** The workshops include the 340B Drug Pricing Program, options for drug procurement through wholesalers, and buying groups and contracting with a retail pharmacy to dispense 340B drugs.

PLEASE ROUTE TO:

- ____ **Executive Director**
- ____ **Medical Director**
- ____ **Clinic Manager**
- ____ **Nurse Manager**

Address Correction Requested

www.medpin.org • 510.302.3341 • info@medpin.org



What Do You Do When the Medicine Cabinet is Empty?

Looking into an empty medicine cabinet is a reality for millions of Californians with no health insurance or without drug cover-

age who cannot afford to buy the prescription medications they need.

Safety net providers grapple with how to supply needed medications for their uninsured and under-insured patients. One organization, Volunteers in Health Care (VIH), a non-profit funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is a national resource center on caring for the uninsured.

VIH products and services

VIH has created the RxAssist website (www.rxassist.org) and RxAssist Plus, the free patient and medication

tracking software that works with this website. In addition, they have several pharmaceutical related products that include: 1) a “shopper’s guide” that provides basic information on software available to help manage patient assistance program (PAP) information; 2) a similar list on pharmaceutical inventory software products (in process) and; 3) a free, 35-page manual, *Guidance to Management of Physician Samples*. To request information on RxAssist, RxAssist Plus, or other products contact VIH at their toll-free number (877) 844-8442 or log onto their website at www.volunteersinhealthcare.org.

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