

# INSURANCE TACTICS: Copay Accumulators



## WHAT ARE COPAY ACCUMULATOR PROGRAMS?

Many people with chronic diseases use charitable copay cards or coupons to pay for medications their doctors prescribed. Historically, their payment would count toward their health plan's deductible, helping them meet their out-of-pocket obligations for the year. However, insurance companies are increasingly blocking patients from counting these payments toward their deductibles through so-called "copay accumulators" in their plans.

"Copay accumulators" prevent copay cards and coupons from counting toward a patient's out-of-pocket limits, forcing patients to bear a higher burden for their treatment costs, while insurers pocket the savings. Ultimately patients not only pay more up front but more over time, and they pass along any savings anticipated from their coupons or copay cards to their insurer instead.

Often insurers add these loopholes to their health plans with no notice of the change, leading to surprises for patients at the pharmacy counter – and leaving many unable to afford their health care.

## IMPACT ON PATIENTS

Copay accumulator programs force patients to choose between paying for medical treatment and life's other necessities, causing patients to put their health at risk.



Nearly 60 percent of commercially insured patients are enrolled in plans that have the capability to implement copay accumulator programs unless protections are enacted and enforced<sup>1</sup>



Research shows that when a patient's cost-sharing exceeds \$250, nearly 70 percent of patients abandon treatment<sup>2</sup>



87 percent of copay coupons are used by patients to afford medications that have no generic alternatives<sup>3</sup>

INSURER COLLECTS  
**\$10,500**



VS  
INSURER COLLECTS  
**\$3,500**

When copay accumulator programs were implemented, plans collected \$10,500 in payments from the beneficiary and copay cards or coupons, compared to \$3,500 in payments when copay assistance counted toward the patient's deductible<sup>4</sup>

## PATIENT SPOTLIGHT



**PATIENT NAME:** MICHELLE JOHNSON

**DISEASE:** ENDOMETRIOSIS

**LOCATION:** CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

“ Advocacy is important to me because so many women have so many questions about their disease, but are afraid to ask. So many women live in excruciating pain, but wear plastered smiles while keeping quiet. So many women suffer in silence, believing that they are alone and that no one else understands. By being an advocate, I can give a voice to these women. I can speak for them when they can't or aren't comfortable speaking out for themselves. I can stand with them in affirming that they are not alone, they are not crazy and what they are experiencing is not 'all in their head'.

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### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- 1 REVIEW** your health plan to see if it utilizes a copay accumulator program.
- 2 TALK** to your benefits manager to learn how the copay accumulator program will impact your ability to afford treatment.
- 3 INFORM** your health care provider about your insurance plan's copay accumulator program and the impact it has on your ability to afford your treatment.
- 4 ADVOCATE** by sharing your story with the Chronic Disease Coalition, your state's insurance commissioner and your elected officials.



### REFERENCES

- <https://www.drugchannels.net/2018/12/copay-accumulator-update-widespread.html>
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- IMS Institute For Healthcare Informatics. (2014) Patient Savings Program Use Analysis. Retrieved from [http://162.44.221.25/files/web/IMSH%20Institute/Healthcare%20Briefs/Patient\\_Savings\\_Program\\_Impact\\_Analysis.pdf](http://162.44.221.25/files/web/IMSH%20Institute/Healthcare%20Briefs/Patient_Savings_Program_Impact_Analysis.pdf)
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