Aetna/Coventry Medicare Part D Plan Issues

The start of a New Year traditionally brings time for reflection and joy as we look forward to a new calendar year. However, the start to 2015 has brought about many concerns to community pharmacists relating to problems that some pharmacies and patients are having with their Aetna/Coventry Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage Plans they enrolled in for 2015. The Iowa Pharmacy Association (IPA) has been working closely with our national partners, the Regional CMS office, Senator Grassley’s office, and other organizations to address the concerns raised from this disaster – a disaster that is being called ‘the worst’ since implementation of Medicare Part D.

IPA will continue to be a resource to you and your pharmacy during this troubling time. IPA is focused on collecting Iowa stores to catalog and share with the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), who is working directly with CMS, and has done a tremendous job in proposing and working towards solutions to this problem. IPA strongly encourages members to document the patient cases of those impacted and share with IPA and your members of Congress.

As CMS has worked with NCPA and Aetna to resolve this situation, a few short-term remedies have been utilized. While the remedies may alleviate some stress; we acknowledge it still adds a burden on the delivery of patient care.

Summary of Short-Term Remedies:

- Patients affected by this situation will qualify for the Special Enrollment Period. Patients will have to contact 1-800-Medicare (633-4227) to switch plans. This new plan will not become active until February 1st. All 1-800-Medicare operators have been given instructions to handle this situation. Beneficiaries should say ‘I was misled by Aetna’ to directly gain assistance. See NCPA flier for more information.
- CMS has allowed pharmacies to remain part of the Aetna/Coventry Part D network beginning January 12th (prescription claims approved effective January 1st). This override process is projected to be allowed through February 28th. However, delays have occurred by Aetna/Coventry to switch pharmacies into this override network. It is projected that all effected pharmacies can process claims by Friday, January 26th. Pharmacies should retro-actively bill claims for prescriptions that were provided to patients before Jan 12th to avoid disruptions in care.

Below are previous messages from NCPA to assist you and any of your patients who might be experiencing problems with the Medicare Part D plan.

Pharmacists: Aetna Medicare Part D Drug Plans Plagued With Glitches

Medicare beneficiaries and caregivers, in an unwelcome New Year’s surprise, are discovering that they are unable to fill prescriptions at pharmacies promoted by Aetna/Coventry Part D drug
plans listed on the Medicare Plan Finder website used during the 2014 Medicare open enrollment to select a 2015 drug plan.  Read more

Message #1 from NCPA (January 6, 2015)

NCPA continues to focus on the current Medicare Part D issues surrounding 2015 Aetna Part D plans and the negative impact on patients and pharmacies. We are communicating daily with CMS including another high level conference call today to report problems and recommend improved CMS solutions.

In addition, we continue to provide pharmacies and patients with information to help them navigate the current situation. The latest information provided to pharmacies today is attached. Page one of the document is a special alert for the pharmacy staff explaining the current methods available to assist patients along with a link to NCPA’s Medicare Complaint Form for pharmacists. Page two of the attached is a sample communication to affected beneficiaries on their plan options that may be distributed to Medicare beneficiaries who were misled by incorrect marketing information concerning their Part D plan's pharmacy network.

Finally, NCPA will communicate with you early next week on our current legislative strategy and how you and your customers/members can help moving forward. Right now, the most important steps you can take to assist your customers and NCPA in its efforts are to:

1. Encourage pharmacies to have as many patients as they can contact 1-800-Medicare per Page Two of the attached document and inquire about their rights to switch plans AND file a complaint with CMS concerning the misleading marketing information they were provided
2. Have pharmacies provide NCPA with as many examples as possible of patient harm or access issues using the NCPA Complaint Form

Message #2 from NCPA (January 12, 2015)

On January 9th, NCPA strongly recommended to CMS that they work with Aetna to implement a temporary processing fix for non-network pharmacies (utilizing an existing Aetna contract already in place with most pharmacies) for patients and pharmacies that have experienced problems with the network pharmacy confusion with certain 2015 Aetna Part D plans. In addition, we advised that the fix be retroactive to 1/1/15 to allow for processing of claims by non-network pharmacies that may have already been filled but not adjudicated since 1/1/15 in efforts to assist patients.

The attached Aetna communication appears to outline just such a plan effective now. It states:

"If your pharmacy is a Non Participating provider in the Aetna/Coventry 2015 Standard or Standard Preferred networks, you will be able to temporarily process claims for certain Coventry Medicare Part D members at Premier Preferred in-network reimbursement rates starting Monday, Jan. 12, 2015. The effective date of this temporary transition will be January 1, 2015."
Though this is a temporary solution, NCPA believes that this is a very positive step towards helping patients receive the medications they need while alleviating the immediate problems for most pharmacies.

NCPA has also inquired as to whether there is a similar process being developed to address any Aetna Part D patients/claims that are processed by CVSCaremark, however, as of this writing we have not received any information on whether that is pending.

In Summary:

- Collect patient stories, and document disruptions in care, time spent by pharmacist, inconvenience to patient, etc. Share these stories with IPA and your members of Congress
- If your patients are able, have them contact members of Congress also
- Assist patients during their SEP (special enrollment period)
- Continue processing claims for Jan/Feb prescriptions once your pharmacy is added to the network
- IPA is working with closely with NCPA (who is taking the lead at the national level) and Senator Grassley’s office