

Letters

Prescription Coverage for Dual Eligibles

As you may know, many prescription drug plans (PDPs) may have been above the benchmark for certain areas/states in 2009 for dual eligibles. All auto-assigned duals would have been moved to different plans. However, as you may also know, all dual-eligibles are not auto-assigned, and the dual “choosers” had to choose another plan for prescription coverage for 2009. However, the PDPs have typically continued to pay pharmacy claims on dual eligibles in long-term care (LTC) through the first quarter of 2009.

The plans sent premium notices (the premium or amount owed) that were the difference between the

plan premium and the benchmark bid to all the duals (or responsible party, Power of Attorney, etc).

Pharmacies may be getting notices through pharmacy claims adjudication of noncoverage. This will happen on those duals who did not pay their premium and may have been terminated by their plan.

Facilities can assist their residents by working with them and their families if they hear of any such issues with their prescription plans.

*Ken Tuell, RPh, CGP
Humana Pharmacy Solutions
Medicare Pharmacy Regional Consultant
Humana Inc.*

I want to thank Ken Tuell for taking the time to enlighten us on this important issue that involves many drug plans such as United Healthcare, Humana, and others. We all need to make sure that our patients have the coverage they need for prescription medications.

—RGS

In Memoriam: Mark H. Beers, MD

Dr. Mark Beers, a nationally respected leader in the development of guidelines for the care of the elderly, died of complications of diabetes on Saturday, February 28, 2009, in Miami at the age of 54. He was an eminent geriatrician, pharmaco-epidemiologist, medical educator, and author.

After an early career as a physician scientist studying patterns of drug use by older patients at Harvard and UCLA Medical Schools, and at the RAND Corporation, he began a 15-year career in medical writing and editing at Merck & Co., Inc. Starting as Associate Editor of *The Merck Manuals* and Co-Editor of *The Merck Manual of Geriatrics* in 1992, he rose to Senior Director of Geriatrics, and Executive Director of Geriatrics and Medical Literature and Editor-in-Chief, *The Merck Manuals* in 2000, from which he retired in 2006.

Born in NYC, he attended Tufts University, and University of Vermont Medical School. After residency training in internal medicine at Boston's New England Medical Center and NYC's Mount Sinai Hospital, Beers completed his training in geriatric medicine at Harvard Medical School. He then joined the faculty at UCLA and RAND, where he conducted the seminal work resulting in the 1991 publication of the Beers Criteria—a list of medications that rarely if ever should be used in older persons. This work marked the beginning of a continuing national effort to protect older persons from adverse drug effects, which included a 1999 Institute of Medicine Report on medical errors that emphasized the importance of medication safety. He held professorships at multiple medical schools, including UCLA, University of Pennsylvania, Medical College of Pennsylvania-Hahnemann, Drexel, and most recently at the University of Miami.

A selfless contributor to nonprofit organizations, Beers served on the Boards of the Pennsylvania Center for Adapted Sports, the ASCP Foundation, the National Council on Aging, the Alliance for Aging Research, and the American Federation for Aging Research. He was President of the American Federation for Aging Research 2004-2006. He also served on the Editorial Advisory Board of *Medicare Patient Management*.

