How Can I Help Patients Get Their Medications?

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Question:

How can I help my uninsured patients get the medicines they need?

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Clinicians routinely encounter patients who are unable to afford their medications. According to the US Census Bureau, 50.7 million people (16.7%) were without some form of health insurance in 2009.[1] Even among those with insurance, a significant proportion of patients have inadequate prescription coverage. Patients either have to seek sources of assistance to pay for medications or forego treatments altogether.

Patient Assistance Programs

Clinicians can direct these patients and providers to a variety of patient assistance programs (PAPs) that serve to promote access to free or reduced cost medications. Manufacturers can be contacted directly to inquire about PAPs they offer for their products. But even more comprehensive information on medication and healthcare assistance is provided by a number of organizations that serve as a conduit to the larger realm of PAPs offered by state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and pharmaceutical manufacturers. The organizations discussed in more detail below are accessible via the Internet and some by telephone.

Partnership for Prescription Assistance

The Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA)[2] was launched in 2005. PPA provides access to more than 475 public and private programs that provide over 2500 free or nearly free medications. According to their data, PPA has helped over 6 million patients obtain free or reduced cost medication. An advantage of the PPA is that it can be accessed by telephone in addition to the internet.

The PPA Internet request process is fairly straightforward. Via the Website, a patient or caregiver can enter the name(s) of the medications needed along with some basic financial

information. Depending on the particular needs of the patient, PPA then directs the requester to various assistance programs that would meet those specific needs. For example, a resident in Maryland can enter duloxetine (Cymbalta®) in the drug name field, along with address and income information.

The Website then provides a download for the paper application for the Lilly Cares program along with contact information for a statewide program that assists healthcare providers or patients with completing the PAP application. The site also provides a search tool for free and information on low-cost clinics based on zip code, discount drug cards, and a variety of other healthcare resources.

For more information, see [Partnership for Prescription Assistance](#) or call 1-888-4PPA-NOW (1-888-477-2669).

NeedyMeds

NeedyMeds[3] is a nonprofit organization whose mission is "to make information about assistance programs available to low-income patients and their advocates at no cost." Information on thousands of free or low-cost PAPs, government programs, disease management assistance resources, and clinics, is accessed via the NeedyMeds.org Website. Depending on the type of information requested, the Website may link one to a variety of resources. If one types "Pradaxa®" in the Brand Names list within the Patient Assistance Programs section, they will be linked to information on obtaining a discount drug card (Pradaxa® Savings Card) offered by Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

NeedyMeds offers PAPTracker, a Web-based subscription software program that can be used by providers and clinics to expedite preparation of manufacturers' application forms.

For more information, see [NeedyMeds](#).