



Providence St. Joseph Health, Blue Shield of California Team Up to Deliver Immediate Drug Cost Savings for Patients

New tools improve price transparency, letting providers see members' actual out-of-pocket costs and giving members access to provider cost information.

by Jasmine Pennic - 07/09/2019

Blue Shield of California and Providence St. Joseph Health has announced a new collaboration to help patients save hundreds of dollars a year on prescriptions. Providence St. Joseph providers are now using the new Drug-Cost Transparency Services, developed by Gemini Health LLC, and offered to Blue Shield of California plan members. Blue Shield is making the service available through its innovative collaboration with Gemini Health at no additional cost to providers.

As drug costs rise, patients are continuously faced with surprises when they arrive at the pharmacy. However, thanks to this new collaboration, providers will now have access to patient out-of-pocket costs at the point of care which will allow them to select prescriptions based on both treatment and cost.

After a successful pilot program with Providence St. Joseph Health providers in Orange County, the service is now available to nearly 800 prescribers within the health system's offices in Northern and Southern California. The providers and their patients already are seeing significant savings results. In the first two months since the program's expansion, the initiative is expected to deliver \$100,000 in annualized savings in patients' out-of-pocket costs based upon switches made from existing medications to lower cost clinically equivalent alternatives.

Through the collaboration St. Joseph Health providers can see Blue Shield members' plan and benefit-specific information on the actual out-of-pocket costs for the patient, as well as the total cost for the member's current medications. In addition, the technology, which is powered by Gemini Health, LLC, identifies dose-matched clinically equivalent alternative medications which are lower-cost based upon the member's insurance.

The information is delivered to prescribers each time a Blue Shield member is seen for care by Providence St. Joseph providers, who can view the drug cost information within their electronic health record (EHR) system. The service is now available to nearly 800 prescribers within the health system's offices in Northern and Southern California.

“Our nonprofit mission is to help ensure Californians have access to quality health care at an affordable price, and that includes prescription drugs,” said Terry Gilliland, M.D., Executive Vice President of Health Care Quality and Affordability, Blue Shield of California. “The collaboration with Gemini and Providence St. Joseph Health is an example of making that vision a reality by using latest technologies to solve one of the thorniest problems in our healthcare system – skyrocketing drug costs.”

The service also can reduce pharmacy call-backs to the provider's office to resolve drug coverage issues and thereby enhance provider productivity, while helping to identify the treatments with the lowest out-of-pocket costs to improve patient satisfaction and adherence.