

## **BILHPN Pharmacy Newsletter Prep Document**

**Pharmacy Newsletter Name:** *Beyond Prescriptions – BILHPN Pharmacy Program Updates*

**General Intro:** Medication management is an important component of patient care. In fact, medication costs make up about 25% of total medical expense, and therapies are becoming more complex than ever.

Beth Israel Lahey Health Performance Network (BILHPN) pharmacy programs are focused on supporting our providers by developing tools to help prescribe cost-effective, evidence-based medication therapy when managing patients' acute and chronic health care needs.

We've focused our inaugural *Beyond Prescriptions-BILHPN Pharmacy Program Updates* on diabetes education and prescribing. Improving diabetes outcomes is a system-wide initiative and our team has put together several provider-focused resources to support you when making treatment decisions.

We encourage you to identify areas where BILHPN can offer you and your team the most assistance (e.g. reference materials, coverage charts, cost comparisons, clinical tools), and we will share materials and updates in future *Beyond Prescriptions-BILHPN Pharmacy Newsletter* as well as group meetings and one-on-one discussions.

We look forward to working with you!  
-The BILHPN Pharmacy Team

### **Practical Prescribing Pearls**

#### ***Subheading: Top-ten take-home points for diabetes***

1. Metformin remains the first-line medication option for patients with type 2 diabetes. In patients who have been unable to tolerate metformin in the past, consider re-challenging by starting low and titrating slowly as tolerated.
2. The second drug added to a patient's regimen will depend on the predominant factor(s) complicating their diabetes treatment. Determine first whether the patient is at high risk for ASCVD or CKD. If no, consider things like risk of hypoglycemia, need for weight loss, and cost.
3. Medications that have demonstrated decreased risk of CVD include metformin, certain GLP-1 receptor antagonists, and certain SGLT-2 inhibitors. As of 2008, all new anti-diabetic agents must undergo clinical trials to demonstrate no significantly increased risk of CVD compared to placebo.

[Read all 10 take-home points](#)

### **"adviseRx" and Alosa Health**

#### ***Subheading: A Diabetes Education Program for Providers; CME's Available!***

BILHPN has partnered with Alosa Health, a national non-profit organization based in Boston, to make available an educational program for providers focused on type 2 diabetes medications. The program is called "adviseRx" and is funded by the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission.

The goal of this program is to provide practitioners with up-to-date evidence-based treatment recommendations for type 2 diabetes, including individualized glycemic targets, choice of glucose-lowering medications based on cardiovascular outcomes data, and treatment simplification to avoid hypoglycemia.

A trained BILHPN pharmacist will meet with you 1:1 in your office to review the materials, and will be available to serve as a resource for medication-related questions, devoid of all commercial influences. Participation in the program is completely voluntary. After completing the educational module, you will be eligible to receive Continuing Medical Education credits.

Visit [www.alosahealth.org](http://www.alosahealth.org) for more information and sample materials.

### **Diabetes Medications**

Several medications have demonstrated in recent clinical trials cardiovascular and/or renal benefits in addition to their glucose-lowering ability. Selecting the right drugs when intensifying therapy can be daunting. Several medication and patient specific factors along with health plan formulary restrictions must be considered when deciding on the most efficacious medication.

View our [updated cost and coverage chart](#) of newer non-insulin diabetes medications and insulin.

### **Medication Spend and Utilization**

Pharmacy costs continue to be a major contributor to total medical expense. BILHPN is focused on three key areas in 2020: retail pharmacy, specialty pharmacy, and medical and injectable pharmacy costs and utilization.

#### *National and Local Prescription Drug Spend Trends*

- *In 2018:*
  - Traditional medications represented 97.8% of prescriptions but trends are declining, driven by a reduction in cost; overall utilization continues to increase primarily in treatment of chronic diseases which makes up about 2/3 of volume.
  - Specialty medications represented 2.2% of volume, utilization increased 7%; this class makes up **50% of retail pharmacy PMPM**, and is the major driver for overall trends driven by both cost and utilization
    - Largest increase in volume is in oncology with a shift to targeted immunotherapies for treatment
- *Looking Forward:*
  - Total net spending growth on pharmaceuticals is forecast to increase 3–6% annually through 2023.
  - Specialty medication utilization will be a major driver, while use of medications for chronic diseases will continue to increase as well

### **Probable carcinogen in some Rx and OTC medications**

**Subheading: The buzz is about N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA);** the impurity that has sparked recalls of irbesartan, losartan, valsartan, ranitidine and now possibly metformin.

NDMA is classified as a probable human carcinogen based on results from laboratory tests. NDMA is a known environmental contaminant -- small amounts are present in drinking water, cigarette smoke, and some common foods and drinks such as grilled meats, bacon, pepperoni, cheese, beer, and whiskey. The bacteria in your stomach make a little bit of NDMA, which can also be made during some chemical reactions.

Keep in mind that it takes a lot of NDMA to be harmful. For example, if 8,000 people take the highest dose of a blood pressure drug contaminated with NDMA every day for four years, there might be one more case of cancer.

When the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) identifies a problem, it takes appropriate, quick action to protect patients. The FDA has strict standards for safety, effectiveness, and quality, and makes every effort to help keep the U.S. drug supply as safe as possible.

[Learn more...](#)