

JOHN A. KITZHABER, M.D.
GOVERNOR



April 26, 2002

Dear Colleague,

During the 2001 Oregon Legislative Session, one of my top priorities was to address the escalating cost of prescription drugs in the Oregon Health Plan. After many months of effort, the 2001 Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 819, which directs the Department of Human Services, in conjunction with the Oregon Health Resources Commission (HRC) to develop a Practitioner-Managed Prescription Drug Plan. My administration is now implementing this statute requiring the state to provide the most effective prescription drugs in the most cost-effective manner to citizens covered by the Oregon Health Plan. For the first time in the history of the United States, a state Medicaid program will include a prescription drug plan that utilizes evidence-based evaluations of the effectiveness of similar medications. Please check out www.ohppr.state.or.us for more information.

Next month the HRC will announce the preferred drugs for the Oregon Health Plan in four pharmaceutical families: non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, lipid lowering agents, anti-ulcer agents and opioid analgesics. The state contracted with the Oregon Health & Science University's Evidence-based Practice Center to conduct research into the clinical effectiveness of these four classes. The HRC appointed four subcommittees of Oregon practitioners and interested citizens to make specific preferred drug selections in each class. Fifty-five of your colleagues have met multiple times to guide this process. Once the HRC has determined the relative effectiveness of the medications in question, it will be easy to see which drug from among those found to be equally effective is the least costly.

The Health Resources Commission will be contacting many of you to arrange a meeting with you and your colleagues to further discuss the plan and the specific drug recommendations. Any assistance you can offer them in this process will be greatly appreciated.

The Office of Medical Assistance Programs (OMAP) will be sending a provider notice and educational material to inform you. Please follow the recommended preferred drugs for the initial treatment of Oregon Health Plan patients. If in your medical judgment your Oregon Health plan patient should receive a non-preferred drug, a simple method will be available for you to note this on the face of the prescription.

The Oregon Medical Association and many consumer organizations support the Oregon Practitioner-Managed Prescription Drug Plan as a tool to reach the mutually beneficial goals of controlling the rising cost of prescription drugs and maintaining the quality of care.

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I hope you will find the evidence-based process used by the HRC and OMAP helpful to you and your patients. The goal is to provide additional useful information about prescription drugs, which will allow the Oregon Health Plan to provide the most effective drugs in the most cost effective manner. As the Practitioner-Managed Prescription Drug Plan process continues, please consider participating on a subcommittee and or testifying at committee meetings.

If you or your staff have any questions or comments please contact Barbara Porter at the Office for Oregon Health Policy and Research, (503) 378-2422, ext. 420 or Barbara.Porter@state.or.us.

Sincerely,



John A. Kitzhaber, M.D.