February 10, 2014

Rear Admiral Thomas McGinnis  
Chief, Pharmacy Operations Directorate  
TRICARE Management Activity  
Federal Docket Management System Office  
4800 Mark Center Drive  
Suite 02G09  
Alexandria, VA 22350

Re: Docket ID: DoD-2013-HA-0085; RIN 0720-AB60; Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS)/TRICARE: Pilot Program for Refills of Maintenance Medications for TRICARE for Life Beneficiaries Through the TRICARE Mail Order Program; Interim final rule

Dear Rear Admiral McGinnis:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments on the interim final rule establishing a five year pilot program that generally requires TRICARE for Life beneficiaries to obtain all refill prescriptions for covered maintenance medications from the TRICARE mail order program or military treatment facility pharmacies. As you consider possible revisions to this rule for the second year of the program, the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) requests you consider our recommendations.

NCPA represents the interests of America's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 23,000 independent community pharmacies. Together they dispense nearly 40% of all retail prescriptions, and employ more than 300,000 individuals, including over 62,000 pharmacists.

**TRICARE should require patient consent of need for medication is documented prior to each delivery via the TRICARE mail order program**

Recently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), notified Medicare Part D plan sponsors that network pharmacies must obtain patient consent to deliver a prescription, new or refill, prior to each delivery.\(^1\) CMS cites, as part of their reasoning for this requirement, a myriad of Part D beneficiary complaints indicating that beneficiaries have had medications delivered that had been

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previously discontinued or were otherwise unwanted and unnecessary at the time of delivery. These practices of automatically delivering either new or refill prescriptions, without first documenting patient need, can lead to very wasteful and costly consequences. Unlike in the retail pharmacy setting where medications that are not picked up by the patient must be returned to stock, and the claim must be reversed, in mail order pharmacy settings this does not occur, and the patient is left with the medication, oftentimes 3 months-worth, that can’t be returned.

NCPA respectfully requests, especially in light of recent CMS requirements, as well as the fact that more TRICARE beneficiaries will be forced to utilize mail order services, that the Department require your contracted mail order pharmacy provider to obtain patient consent to deliver a prescription, new or refill, prior to each delivery.

**NCPA concerned about lack of coordinated care resulting from mandatory mail order pilot program**

Community pharmacists positively impact their patient’s lives on a daily basis by improving medication adherence, coordinating their care, and closely monitoring for potential interactions or adverse effects. We are concerned that the mandatory pilot program perpetuates a silo approach whereby the patient is dispensed a product from one facility while at the same time the patient receives medications from another pharmacy. This approach raises safety concerns, is in opposition to emerging coordinated care models and may lead to sub-optimal patient outcomes. Without a complete medication list and other relevant patient information, pharmacists cannot perform proper drug-utilization reviews, monitor for potential drug-interactions, and appropriately counsel patients. Community pharmacies are often the sole resource for medications and patient education and ensure that important information is being conveyed to the patient from a health care professional with whom they have had a long-standing relationship.

Community pharmacists play a critical role in providing quality care to patients by ensuring safe and appropriate medication use as well as providing prevention and wellness services such as immunizations, medication therapy management (MTM), and chronic care management. Unfortunately, the TRICARE for Life beneficiaries who have to participate in this program will likely be receiving care from multiple pharmacy providers. NCPA recommends that DoD conduct and publicly release a yearly patient satisfaction survey in regards to the pilot program. This will allow an honest assessment of patient experience with the program and will help to identify any problems related to a lack of coordinated medication therapy care.

**Waiver of General Requirements**

NCPA appreciates that the pilot program includes a waiver from the program for certain circumstances. However, NCPA strongly recommends that the DoD publicly instruct TRICARE for Life beneficiaries as to the exact waiver process. All communications from the TRICARE pharmacy benefits manager to beneficiaries should include information on how to obtain a waiver. Explicit information on how to opt out of the program after one year should also be clearly communicated.

**Conclusion**

NCPA appreciates the opportunity to present our thoughts and suggestions on the mandatory mail order pilot program for certain medications for TRICARE for Life beneficiaries. NCPA members are proud to serve the medication and related health and wellness needs of all TRICARE beneficiaries. NCPA is
committed to working with the Department of Defense to ensure that every TRICARE beneficiary’s pharmacy related needs are best met and the highest level of quality and patient care are dutifully delivered.

Sincerely,

Steve Pfister  
Senior Vice President, Government Affairs  
National Community Pharmacists Association