



In Case You Missed It

Cancer may no longer be a death sentence, but accessing might be. For many patients, the unavoidable barrier to accessibility and affordability remains hidden from view - **the influence of Pharmacy Benefit Managers.**

With just a trio of PBMs monopolizing 80% of the prescription drug marketplace, their influence translates into a burdensome process where patients often encounter barriers, delays, and high costs at the pharmacy counter. California has an opportunity to rein in PBMs and improve patient care with **Senate Bill 873 by Senator Steven Bradford.**

In a Golden Age of Cancer Care, PBMs Are Holding Us Back – We must stop predatory and destructive behaviors

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As pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) have become vertically integrated - with just three organizations **dominating 80%** of the prescription drug marketplace - cancer patients receiving oral treatment are increasingly forced to endure PBMs' excessive approval processes and are directed to PBM-owned mail order or specialty pharmacies that refill drugs. These companies, many of whom are owned by or own the largest health insurers, want to control what treatment patients get and how, when, and where they receive it.

As a breast cancer specialist, I've witnessed how these middlemen insert themselves between patients and doctors through an opaque system of authorizations, barriers, and fees that delay patients' access to life-saving treatment.

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PBMs may tell us that this bureaucratic arrangement is a cost-saving measure. Yet, we see no evidence that PBM involvement translates to patient or employer savings. In fact, premiums and out-of-pocket costs continue to rise. The average premium for family coverage in an employer-sponsored plan has **increased 47%** over the past decade, while patients' out-of-pocket spending on prescription drugs **climbed** from 23.8% in 2013 to 25.1% in 2019 (spending fell in 2020, but this was likely due to the pandemic). Further, these abusive practices are used to allow PBMs to control the practice of medicine by removing treatment decisions from providers' hands.

Cancer and other diseases know no political divide. It's long past time that we stop PBMs' destructive behaviors to ensure patients can fully realize the benefits of modern cancer therapies.

Debra Patt, MD, PhD, MBA, is an oncologist specializing in breast cancer in Austin, Texas. She serves in the leadership of Texas Oncology, a large independent community oncology practice that is part of the US Oncology Network, and as vice president of the Community Oncology Alliance.



For more information, contact Le Ondra Clark Harvey, Ph.D.,
California Access Coalition - lclarkharvey@ccbha.org