

# **COST SAVING STRATEGIES TO OBTAIN PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS**

**Richard Shapiro, M.D.**

**Prepared with the assistance of:  
Marko Dragojevic, Caseworker  
James Livingston, PhD, Clinical Services Manager  
Center for Survivors of Torture  
Asian Americans for Community Involvement  
San Jose, CA**

# Which of our Patients Find Difficulty Obtaining Medications and Why?

- Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Asylees
- Immigration Status may Limit Eligibility for Assistance
- Most Disadvantaged are Those Lacking Immigration Status, i.e. Asylum Seekers

# Outline of Some Medication Resources

- Patient Assistance Programs
- Pharmacy Programs
- Other Strategies



# Patient Assistance Programs (PAP)

- Most major pharmaceutical companies operate a PAP
- Intended to provide low or no-cost meds
- Often provide 3 month supply of meds
  - Sometimes continuation possible

# PAP Eligibility Criteria

- Lack of Uniformity of Criteria Necessitates Investigation of Each Program
  - Some have very strict criteria, some less so
- The Bad News: Most Require Citizenship or Permanent Residency
- The Good News: Some Don't Inquire re Immigration Status, So All Can Apply

# Steps for Acceptance by a PAP

- Determine Medication Needed by Patient
  - i.e., *Lexapro*
- Determine Manufacturer(s)
  - i.e., *Forest Pharmaceuticals*
- Research if manufacturer has a PAP
- If So, Research Eligibility Criteria and Obtain Application
  - Information is often available on-line



# Roles

- **Caseworker** Can Research PAP, Obtain Correct Application
- **Patient** Will Fill Out and Sign Form
  - Often with Caseworker support

# Roles

- **Physician**-Portion of Application  
Indicating Medication and Dosage
- Provide Address Receiving Medication
  - MUST be an agency or medical office address
- Attach *Original* Prescription to Application
- Sign and Date



# Receiving Medication

- Patient Name, Type of Medication and Dosage Will be on the Package from the PAP
- A Re-Application Form is Sometimes Included

# PAP Re-Application

- Patient Must Continue to Meet PAP's Eligibility Criteria
- Same Application Form Typically Used for Re-Application
  - Often allows indication of a new or continuing applicant

# Pharmacy Programs

- Many of the Large (usually National) Pharmacies also have Extensive, Low-Cost, Generic Medication Programs
  - Eg, *Wal-Mart, Target, Costco*
- Discount Card Applications Often Available at the Drug Store
  - Eg, *Long's, Walgreens*
- Each Maintains List of Medications They Cover
  - Sometimes regard list as proprietary



# Pharmacy Programs

- The Good News: Most Don't have Immigration Eligibility Criteria
  - Some do require identification
- The Bad News: Not all Medication Categories are Included
  - Eg, psychotropics

# Other Strategies

- Prescribe Generic Medications When Available
- Pharmaceutical Company Representatives
  - Companies will send sales representative if requested
  - Reps often provide medication trial samples
    - Usually responsive to requests for specific medication samples

# Other Strategies

- Medication Samples can be Used to Initiate and Maintain Patients for Limited Time Period
- Representatives Sometimes Able to Provide Larger Amounts of Soon to Expire Medicine



# Other Strategies

- The Good News
  - Sales representative can provide patient access to expensive, up to date medications, across categories
- The Bad News
  - Physician time consumed by sales presentation
  - May not be able to obtain sufficient, on-going medication access for patient maintenance
  - Ethical issue of participating in commercial model of medication sales

# Resources

- Searchable, easy to use sites for correct forms to apply for specific medications
  - <http://www.rxassist.org/>
  - <http://www.pparx.org/Intro.php>