



The Maryland State Medical Society

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THE GAG RULE NEEDS TO BE BROKEN

Blog in Center Maryland, by Gene M. Ransom, III

Physicians and other medical health professionals share their patients' concerns over rising healthcare costs. As insurance premiums, co-pays, and deductibles continue to rise, patients feel the pain, and they feel it acutely at their local pharmacy counter. A regimen of life-changing prescription medications should not be a source of stress and anxiety. That's why MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, supports state legislation sponsored by Delegate Bromwell and Senator Klausmeier to eliminate the "gag rule", which prevents pharmacists from telling patients when the out-of-pocket cost of their prescription drug would cost less than their insurance co-pay (SB 576 / HB 736).

At a time where many drug prices are actually stabilizing, out-of-pocket patient costs continue to rise. The causes of the out-of-pocket increases are complicated. One issue related to drug costs is this "gag rule." Insurance companies actually set the price for what most patients pay at the counter and, to further complicate matters, companies known as "pharmacy benefit managers", or PBMs, are an additional "middle man" between the drug companies and your pharmacy. The PBMs have made rules that prevent pharmacists from telling patients about lower cost options.

While healthcare delivery is complicated, we should all support common-sense measures to make healthcare more affordable, like eliminating the "gag rule" placed on pharmacists. Patients should not be forced to pay more simply because they lack the knowledge of lower cost options, and the people with that knowledge should be able to share it.

We support the General Assembly, as they are close to passing this important legislation to protect patients at the pharmacy counter and improve the public health of Maryland.

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. Formed in 1799, it is still the largest physician organization in Maryland today. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.

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