Health Insurer Aetna Sued for Alleged HIV Discrimination

December 23, 2014

Advocacy group Consumer Watchdog has filed a lawsuit against health insurer Aetna for requiring people with HIV to get their meds through the company's mail-order pharmacy, The New York Times reports.

The lawsuit claims that Aetna's new policy, which takes effect January 1, goes against the federal health care law, which prohibits discrimination against people based on a medical condition.

The new Aetna policy also increases the amount of money people will pay for their HIV medications. According to the lawsuit, Aetna members used to pay $20 to $70 for HIV drugs, but they will now have to pay 20 percent of the cost of the meds, up to $150.

Health advocates say many people with HIV don't want their meds delivered to their homes or places of employment because other people will see their prescriptions, and some people don't have a permanent mailing address. What's more, others prefer seeing a local pharmacist who can help them navigate any side effects or concerns.

This Aetna lawsuit was filed in federal court in San Diego. It's the latest in a number of HIV discrimination cases against insurance companies. After receiving similar complaints, health insurance company Humana agreed this month to cut the price of HIV meds in Florida.

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