Treatment: Medicare Choices

Affordability remains a barrier even among covered individuals.

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Only a small share of HIV-positive people with Medicare coverage are using the long-acting treatment Cabenuva (injectable cabotegravir and rilpivirine). Medicare—the second-largest source of federal funding for HIV care after Medicaid—primarily provides health coverage for seniors, but it also covers some individuals with long-term disabilities. People with HIV on Medicare are more likely to be under 65 and dually eligible for both programs. Researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health looked at the use of long-acting antiretroviral therapy among HIV-positive people enrolled in Medicare from 2021—the year Cabenuva was approved—through 2023. In 2021, 638 people (0.4%) were using the long-acting treatment, rising to 3,202 (1.9%) in 2022 and 5,162 (3.0%) in 2023. Older people, Native Americans and people living in rural areas and the South were less likely to be prescribed Cabenuva. While the number of people opting for long-acting injectables is slowing rising, affordability remains a barrier even among covered individuals.

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