Pen Me In

January 9, 2009 By David Capogna

“In order to change we must be sick and tired of being sick and tired.” ~Author Unknown

While everyone was swimming in Rio, or skiing in Aspen, or the like for the holiday season, I was counting my pennies, literally, preparing for the annually Medicare Part D prescription coverage-gap, or “doughnut hole,” as HIV+ insiders call it. I probably sound like a broken record, but alas, I’m on Medicare, and without help from ADAP, so every year I?m stuck with an enormous price tag (as least for me) for the meds which are going to keep me alive and kicking. In 2008 the ?doughnut hole? was set at $4050, and now, as the economy imploded, it?s rising to $4375. INSANITY! After the first of the year rolls around I have to pay full price for ALL of my meds, until I?ve reached the maximum of the cover-gap, or ?doughnut hole?, or $4375 for 2009. In 2008 the price of a 750mg bottle (1 month?s supply) of Mepron was $1,159.51, which is the highest amount I?ve forked over for any type of medicine. What up with that, is it laces with gold? Atovaquone (Mepron) keep the PCP dormant. Mepron, which FDA approved in 1992, doncha think it?s time to add a generic alternative? Coming in second; Truvada for a 30 day supply $905.54; third, Lovenox at $811.77, Kaletra at $756.45; etc. (By the way, doesn?t it seem like Wal*Mart prices this meds?) Ultimately, with the price of my current meds, I will reach my ?doughnut hole? in a little over a month. Why not space it out, or a flexible system account, or just like Europe or something?! The Medicare system isn?t suited for HIV+ individuals, while people with diabetes, or rheumatoid arthritis, and the like, have many or all drugs in a generic form.

I don?t need to be reminded about the cost of research and testing the drugs have to go through, billions of dollar, I?m sure, plus the patents last 20 years, a tab to long for me. But there has to be a better, more price effective strategy laid out, to get the meds to the people that need them. In December, the New York Times published an article about drug industry freebies (pens, notepads, mugs, paper weights, examining table paper, etc.) The drug corporations are now implementing a voluntary (YES, voluntary) band of such items, in the same that company giving gifts like dinner, tickets to a Brittany concert, free coke, or a prostitute here or there really isn’t ethical. From an angry patient point of view, the last thing I want to see is Claritin tissues, I rather just get free boxes of Claritin pills or maybe two, while I was waiting patiently in the water room to have my umpteen upper-endoscopy or something of the sort. Then there the drug reps, usually two, female, in their last 20?s, and both chewing gum! I HATE DRUG REPS! One ?gal? mans the laptop dealing with mindless speed-sheets, while the other ?gal? talking so loaded about absolutely nothing. On one of my weekly (only during my worse period) to my AIDS doc, a new set of women (sorry) were talking ?drugs-reps-speak,? going on about ?pre-call,? the ?call,? and ?post-call;? for

over an hour. I've even witnessed drug reps scurrying out the door to Starbuck's buying a round of venti-espresso-lux-double-shots for the entire nursing staff. My doc NEVER see drug reps, they end up giving the meds, info, pens, and the like to his assistant. He?s only in the office two days a week, and teaching at the hospital the rest of the time. My doc attends international conferences regarding AIDS meds and/or consult with peers than attend. I'm also fortunately (HA!) than I suffer from liver disease, that limited the number of meds I can take. For example Ambient, Zofolt, and Nexium (the cute little Purple Pill) are all toxics to the liver.

On my last visit to the doctor in late December, of the nurses handed me a Sustiva pen, and exclaimed ?They're been discontinued!? (I thought see what some talking about the Sustiva pen, but then a week later I see the article, and it all become clear.) Now if they could only get rid of the cut-snapping sale reps I really be happy! Regarding the Sustiva pen, I'm putted in my safe-deposit box and waiting for the right moment to auction off at Christie's (to pay for my future doughnut hole!)

I guess the pen ain't as mighty as the sword
Dplus

To read more of this gibberish, please visit my website

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