Implementation of a Pediatric Behavioral Health Medication Safety Initiative in a State Medicaid Program

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The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported behavioral health medication utilization in the pediatric health medications for pediatric members in a state Medicaid Program.

**BACKGROUND**

- An increase in behavioral health medication polypharmacy regimens has been observed in the pediatric population.1
- The utilization of antipsychotic agents in pediatric patients and in combination with other behavioral health medications has increased.1
- The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported concerns with behavioral health medications prescribed in children.

**METHODS**

The PBHMI is a prospective utilization management policy that was developed for specific behavioral health medications and polypharmacy combinations that have limited evidence of safety and efficacy in order to ensure appropriate medication use.

**Initiative Implementation Timeline**

- **December 2011 - 2012:** GAO reports published
- **2011 - 2012:**
  - December 2011 Report: "Department of Health and Human Services guidance could help states improve oversight of psychotropic prescriptions."**
  - In MA, 39.1% of foster care children were prescribed behavioral health medications compared to 10.2% of those not in foster care.
  - Antipsychotic utilization in children covered by Medicaid was twice as likely compared to those privately insured.
- **2013 - 2014:**
  - For Age Restrictions
    - Prescriptions of behavioral health medications for ≥5 members <18 years old
    - Prescriptions for members <6 years old
  - Development of Internal guideline, prior authorization forms, and computer coding.
  - Development of PBHMI webpage materials.
- **2014 - 2015:**
  - Development of PBHMI polypharmacy restrictions in February 2015

**Prior Authorization (PA) Requirements**

- **For Age Restrictions**
  - Pharmacy claims for an alpha2 agonist or cerebral stimulant
  - Any pharmacy claim for an antipsychotic, antidepressant, anticonvulsant, mood stabilizer, or mood stabilizer
  - Any pharmacy claim for an alpha2 agonist or cerebral stimulant

**Targeted Prescriber Telephone Outreach**

- **For Polypharmacy Restrictions**
  - Prescriptions of behavioral health medications for ≥15 members <18 years old
  - Prescriptions for members <6 years old
  - Total number of prescribers: 123
  - Total number of prescribers: 79

**FUTURE PLANS**

- The PBHMI focuses on safe and effective behavioral health medication use in members <18 years old.
- Any pharmacy claims for an alpha2 agonist or cerebral stimulant
- Any pharmacy claim for an antipsychotic, antidepressant, anticonvulsant, mood stabilizer, or mood stabilizer
- Any pharmacy claim for an alpha2 agonist or cerebral stimulant
- Any pharmacy claim for an antipsychotic, antidepressant, anticonvulsant, mood stabilizer, or mood stabilizer
- Any pharmacy claim for an alpha2 agonist or cerebral stimulant

**OUTLOOK**

- The development of prescriber education materials relating to behavioral health medication prescribing trends would be valuable to the goal of the initiative.
- Expansion of the initiative for all pediatric members of the Medicaid program (e.g., members in managed care organizations) is underway.

**REFERENCES**

- December 2012 Report: "Concerns remain about appropriate care.
- December 2014: Staff rehersal training, targeted prescriber telephone outreach (polypharmacy restrictions), implementation of PBHMI polypharmacy restrictions in February 2015

**CONCLUSIONS**

- The PBHMI focuses on safe and effective behavioral health medication use in members <18 years old.
- Any pharmacy claims for an alpha2 agonist or cerebral stimulant
- Any pharmacy claim for an antipsychotic, antidepressant, anticonvulsant, mood stabilizer, or mood stabilizer
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