

June 10, 2003

The Honorable Tom Allen
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Allen:

On behalf of the consumer and labor organizations listed below, we are writing in support of the Prescription Drug Comparative Effectiveness Act of 2003.

Uninsured and underinsured consumers, including millions of Medicare beneficiaries, are paying increasing out-of-pocket costs for their prescription drugs. Even workers with comprehensive employer-based coverage are facing growing copayments for their prescriptions. Despite these escalating costs, it is often difficult for consumers and health care professionals to ensure that they receive value for each healthcare dollar spent.

The Prescription Drug Comparative Effectiveness Act of 2003 would create a resource for independent information about the comparative medical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of important medicines. We believe that this information will substantially reduce the nation's prescription drug expenditures, because consumers and doctors will be able to make decisions using reliable evidence-based information about comparative effectiveness. The bill authorizes the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, in cooperation with the National Institute of Health, to carry out the studies. As a result, consumers, employers, state governments and the federal government will have access to information that will enable them to choose more cost-effective medicines without sacrificing medical effectiveness or quality of care.

We look forward to working with you in support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO
American Federation of Teachers
Center for Medical Consumers
Communications Workers of America
Consumer Federation of America
Consumers Union
Families USA
Gray Panthers
International Union, UAW
International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers
Medicare Rights Center
National Consumers League
National Education Association
National Senior Citizens Law Center
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Service Employees International Union
The Title II Community AIDS National Network



RxHealthValue

June 10, 2003

The Honorable Thomas H. Allen
U.S. House of Representatives
1717 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-1901

Dear Representative Allen:

As the 108th Congress considers reforming the Medicare program and addressing one of the programs major shortcomings – lack of an outpatient prescription drug benefit – we wanted to express support for your recently introduced legislation that would provide limited support for the National Institutes of Health and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to begin studies to compare the relative efficacy and cost-effectiveness of prescriptions medicines designed to treat the same condition. It is this very information that is vital to patients, practitioners, and purchasers. With comparative information on prescription medicines patients, practitioners and purchasers can make better decisions with respect to choosing the prescription medicines to take, prescribe, cover, and pay for.

RxHealthValue is a national coalition of large employers, consumer groups, labor unions, health plans, health care providers and pharmacy benefit managers that, through its members, represents almost 100 million Americans. RxHealthValue is committed to research, education and both public - and private-sector solutions to ensure that Americans receive the full health and economic value from their prescription drugs. The Coalition's definition of "value" includes effectiveness, cost, appropriate use and safety.

The Prescription Drug Comparative Effectiveness Act of 2003 (H.R. 2356) is a very important component of any Medicare prescription drug benefit proposal, since it is imperative that the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have the information to be a prudent purchaser of prescription drugs. We are pleased that you ask the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to add to the very limited research results from which evidence-based reviews get their information, and that you recognized the importance of dissemination so that information gets to providers and consumers when



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they need it. We agree that AHRQ's Evidence-based Practice Centers (EPCs), which have been involved in the innovative Oregon prescription drug program, would be an outstanding vehicle for such reviews.

This legislation is especially important as Congress works to provide Medicare beneficiaries with high quality outpatient drug coverage. We applaud all the sponsors of this important legislation and look forward to working with you and others to ensure that improved information on prescription drugs is available to all.

For more information on RxHealth's position on this and other drug value initiatives, please contact Steve Cole, Policy Committee Chair, at 202-296-1314.

Again, thank you from the member organizations of RxHealthValue:

Blue Cross/Blue Shield
Kaiser
AARP
National Consumers League
Verizon
Association of Community Health Plans
General Motors
Ford
Daimler Chrysler
Families USA
National Organization of Rare Disorders

American Academy of Family
Physicians
Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy
UAW
AFSCME
Pacific Business Group on Health
Midwest Business Group on Health
Washington Business Group on Health
Advance-PCS
Caremark Rx
AFL-CIO

GMS/cm