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Are Drug Costs Killing You?

Even with health insurance, prescription deductibles and co-pays may leave needed drugs uncomfortably expensive or even unaffordable. Here are possible solutions:

1. If you meet certain criteria for income and total cost of needed medications you may qualify to have free medicines sent to your doctor's office for you under the **drug manufacturer's "COMPASSIONATE NEED" program.**
 - a. These are programs all brand name drug companies have so they can justify high drug prices to Congress by claiming that they provide free drugs to patients who really can't afford them.
 - b. They generally do what you'd expect for programs with those goals, promoting to the world how compassionate they are but then making it hard (but not impossible) to qualify.
 - c. If you think you can prove that you have a low income and high medical costs, go on line, search for the name of the drug and "Compassionate use," and see what you can do. If you qualify let us know and we can send a prescription to the program for which you qualify.
2. www.GoodRx.com is a website that offers discount coupons for most prescription drugs both brand name and generic, sold in the US. Enter the drug name and your zip code and coupons pop up for all participating pharmacies in your area. These are cash or credit card prices that don't use your health insurance. They give you a share of the discount your pharmacy benefits plan would get and keep for itself if you filled the prescription through your health insurance. **GoodRx saved some of our patients more than 90%** their cost for the same drugs if bought through their health insurance prescription benefit!
3. There are other websites that offer the same or similar services. Do an internet search for "Prescription drug discounts."
4. You are allowed to have prescriptions for your individual use filled at approved pharmacies outside the US and sent to you by mail. If you register as a user and type in the name and strength of your drug, a website called **Pharmacy Checker <www.pharmacychecker.com>** will give you prices at a number of participating Canadian mail-order pharmacies. Many (but not all) list the country of origin and some also name the manufacturer and if brand or generic. Different countries and also different manufacturers may have different standards for safety.
 - a. If you've collected the available online data and would like me to review it with you and give an opinion about which if any option I'd recommend for a member of my own family, I'll be happy to do so by telemedicine if you want to email copies of the different drug screen shots to us at aasj@aasj.com and then schedule a telemedicine appointment to review them.
 - b. Drugs purchased from sources outside of the US will not be covered by US pharmacy benefit insurance but may still be your least expensive option.
 - c. Many of the Canadian pharmacies listed by Pharmacy Checker ship drugs made outside of North America from business partners in the other countries. It may take up to a month to get drug from these sources.

Good luck.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Coifman, M. D. and the staff of AASJ