Reimbursement and Patient Assistance Programs for Oral Chemotherapy Agents

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Oncology nurses increasingly are being asked about medication insurance coverage for oral chemotherapy agents and other medications. In small clinic and office settings, nurses often are key providers of this information. Nurses need to be informed about Medicare's medication reimbursement guidelines and able to identify resources for patients. Resources may include pharmaceutical manufacturers, patient medication assistance programs, and medication discount programs. This article reviews these resources and provides tips to use them optimally in busy oncology practices.

Key Words: healthcare costs; prescriptions, drug; drug costs

Inpatient hospital care
Skilled nursing facility care
Home health care
Hospice care
Blood and blood products
Medicare Part B helps to cover the following, with conditions.
Medical services and durable medical equipment
Clinical laboratory services
Home health care
Outpatient hospital services
Blood and blood products

People receiving Medicare benefits are responsible for 20% of their healthcare costs, and Medicare covers the remainder. When a facility or Medicare service provider agrees to take what is termed “Medicare assignment,” they accept the payment that Medicare will reimburse for a particular service or medication.

Choice plans or Medigap plans provide people receiving Medicare benefits with extra purchasable coverage. Some choice plans are managed-care plans and cover extra costs not covered by Medicare, such as prescription drugs, eye examinations, hearing aids, and routine physical examinations. Medicare recipients with a secondary managed-care plan usually must see a physician or specialist associated with the plan. Another type of secondary insurance plan is a private fee-for-service plan. Medicare recipients with this type of secondary coverage generally have a wider choice of healthcare providers and are eligible for additional benefits. However, the cost may be high for this type of supplemental Medicare coverage. Detailed information

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