Support Staff Benefit Program Changes Coming Soon

This is the third bulletin for 2015 prepared by the Support Staff Benefits Committee and provides an overview of upcoming changes and how to use tools to help you manage your prescription drug costs.

In October, the Support Staff Benefits Committee (SSBC) issued two bulletins regarding upcoming prescription drug plan changes to the Support Staff Benefits Plan (SSBP). These changes are designed to ensure the benefits plan is meeting the benefit needs of plan members in a way that is efficient and cost effective, and able to be sustained into the future. The plan prioritizes health products and services that demonstrate a high value for covered members and their dependants at a reasonable plan cost. The plan attempts to ensure covered members and their dependants have the health resources they need, when they need it, based on the unique health status of each individual, in a fair and cost-effective design for the health of the benefits plan.

Summary of Changes Effective January 1, 2016

1. Specialty and high-cost drugs will require prior authorization.

   The plan will be adopting a disease-state cost-management approach for prior authorization in seventeen areas. This change will not apply to individuals already being treated prior to January 1, 2016 for one of the conditions with a specialty or biologic drug approved through the prior authorization process. Some drug products will receive preferential listing and individuals will be required to first try those specific treatments in order to have their costs covered by the plan. If there is a medically based clinical reason that the preferred product cannot be used by the individual (e.g. tried the product and could not tolerate the side effects, etc.), and alternate drug will be covered. For more information on the prior authorization process, see the Sun Life Prior Authorization document available on the HRS Support Staff Benefits website at http://goo.gl/YDqgcp or visit the Prior Authorization Drug List and Forms page on the Sun Life website at http://goo.gl/g1ZLKS.

2. Non-specialty drugs, maintenance medications, and over-the-counter drug products

   a. The Benefit Plan will introduce an expanded preferred pricing policy for prescription drugs.

   Lowest cost alternative (LCA) pricing will be mandatory and physician override of lower cost generic drugs for brand products will no longer be covered. If you choose to use a higher cost drug, the plan will pay the lowest cost price and you will be responsible for payment of the additional charge. Those additional costs however are eligible to be covered by your health spending account (HSA). The plan will also introduce therapeutic alternative preferred pricing in four therapeutic groups. Drugs to treat stomach hyperacidity, high blood pressure, anti-inflammatories, and triptans (for treatment of migraines) will be impacted.
b. Support staff with prescriptions on the maintenance medications list will be covered for a maximum of five dispensing fees per calendar year for each maintenance medication.

Any additional dispensing fees will become an out-of-pocket expense and not be covered by the SSBP. These fees are an eligible expense under the HSA.

c. Non-life sustaining over-the-counter (OTC) drug products will not be reimbursed under the SSBP effective January 1, 2015.

Using the my Sun Life Mobile App

Sun Life Financial, the company that provides extended health, dental and drug plan insurance for the University of Alberta, offers all employees access to the My Sun Life Mobile App.

The mobile app for Android, BlackBerry and iPhone provides you with the ability to:
- submit claims online for instant processing
- view claims history
- find what drugs, medical expenses and dental procedures you are covered for
- see when you are eligible for your next pair of eyeglasses or dental check up
- view how much you have in your health spending account
- find alternative prescription drugs and find how much each costs the plan or you

You can learn more about the Sun Life Mobile app and view a short online interactive demonstration on how to use the app at https://goo.gl/yC74X8.

Finding Alternative Drug Treatments and Lowest Cost Pricing

Beginning January 1, 2016, you may use the Sun Life Mobile app or the MySunlife.ca website to search your drug prescriptions and find out how much of each prescription will be paid under the lowest cost alternative (LCA) pricing. The mobile app or website will also show you alternative drugs for the same treatment and how much they cost.

To learn how to use the Sun Life Mobile app to find specific drug coverage, watch the overview video available at https://goo.gl/lUbLKu. If you don’t have access to the mobile app, please log into mysunlife.ca and click on My Coverage then Drug Coverage to view options.

How Can You Learn More

To review the upcoming changes in more detail, review the previous two bulletins and access other information about your extended health, drug and dental plan benefits, please visit The Support Staff Benefits section of the Human Resource Services website at http://goo.gl/YDqgcp.

We encourage you to go to the Sun Life website at http://www.mysunlife.ca and review resources available to you as a plan member. If you have any questions, please contact Payroll and Benefit Services at benefits@ualberta.ca or by phone at 780-492-4555.