

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Olympia, Washington**

To: All Prescribers
Managed Care Organizations
Nursing Home Administrators
Pharmacists
Regional Support Networks

Memo: 09-11
Issued: March 31, 2009

From: Douglas Porter, Assistant Secretary
Health and Recovery Services
Administration

For further information, go to:
<http://hrsa.dshs.wa.gov/pharmacy>

Subject: Prescription Drug Program: Implementation of Step Therapy for Inhaled Long-Acting Beta Agonist/Corticosteroid Combination Drugs

<p>Effective May 1, 2009, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) will implement step therapy for inhaled long-acting beta agonist/corticosteroid combination drugs.</p>

Implementation of Step Therapy for Inhaled Long-Acting Beta Agonist/Corticosteroid Combination Drugs

Effective May 1, 2009, DSHS will require authorization for the following inhaled long-acting beta agonist/corticosteroid combination drugs when there is no record in DSHS's payment system that the client has had a previous trial of an inhaled corticosteroid medication:

- Advair Diskus® or Advair® HFA (salmeterol/fluticasone propionate); and
- Symbicort® (formoterol fumarate dihydrate/budesonide).

DSHS will require documentation of **one of the following**:

- The client tried and failed inhaled corticosteroid monotherapy;
- Disease severity warranting initiation with two maintenance therapies; or
- The client is being treated for airflow obstruction associated with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (including emphysema and chronic bronchitis).

Black box warning for these combination drugs states that long-acting beta agonists may increase the risk of asthma-related death. The FDA-approved prescribing information for the inhaled long-acting beta agonist/corticosteroid combinations states that for the indication of asthma, the combination should only be used for patients:

- Whose disease is not adequately controlled on other asthma-controller medications (e.g., low- to medium- dose inhaled corticosteroids); or
- Whose disease severity clearly warrants initiation of treatment with two maintenance therapies, as found in the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) report “Diagnosis and Management of Asthma” located at:
http://www.guideline.gov/summary/summary.aspx?doc_id=11676&nbr=006025.

How can I get DSHS/HRSA provider documents?

To obtain DSHS/HRSA provider numbered memoranda and billing instructions, go to the DSHS/HRSA website at <http://hrsa.dshs.wa.gov> (click the *Billing Instructions and Numbered Memorandum* link). These may be downloaded and printed.