Anthem Also Prioritizes Sovaldi and Harvoni Over Viekira Pak

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Anthem, the largest insurance provider for businesses in the United States, has made a deal with Gilead Sciences to use its two new hepatitis C virus (HCV) drugs as the primary option for patients with genotype 1 of hep C, Bloomberg reports.

The provider's move to prioritize Gilead's Sovaldi (sofosbuvir) and Harvoni (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir) over all other new HCV drugs on the market accelerates an ongoing hep C treatment pricing war.

The deals started in December, when pharmacy benefits manager Express Scripts made an agreement with AbbVie to exclusively cover its new Viekira Pak HCV regimen (ombitasvir/paritaprevir/ritonavir; dasabuvir), instead of Gilead's new hep C drugs.

Anthem, which served more than 3 million Americans in 2013, normally uses Express Scripts to run its insurance formularies. However, it has decided to bypass its benefits manager's preference for AbbVie's regimen.

Anthem cited pricing deals as its main reason to cover Harvoni and Sovaldi, as well as the fact that Gilead's former treatment only requires patients to take one pill per day.

AbbVie's Viekira Pak combo has a cheaper list price than Gilead's drugs, at $83,319 for 12 weeks of treatment. However, it requires most patients to take four to six pills per day. Sovaldi, on the other hand, costs $84,000 for a 12-week treatment and Harvoni costs $94,500 for 12 weeks.

Anthem joins CVS/Caremark in its pro-Gilead coverage decision. So far, both companies have declined to comment on details of the agreement, such as whether certain patients will be prioritized for treatment coverage or what sort of price cuts they may have received.

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