Connecticut Cuts Costs of Hepatitis C Drugs Through Medicaid

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Connecticut is making moves to ensure new hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatments are more accessible for the state's poorest patients, the Hartford Courant reports. The state will classify Sovaldi (sofosbuvir), Harvoni (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir) and Viekira Pak (ombitasvir/paritaprevir/ritonavir, dasabuvir) as "preferred drugs" in its Medicaid program and will simplify the prior authorization process for HCV cures.

State Medicaid officials said the new "preferred" classification and updated one-page insurance approval form will make top hep C cures "readily available" to clients as soon as the changes kick in July 1. Thanks to rebates and negotiated discounts from drug manufacturers Gilead Sciences and AbbVie, Connecticut will also pay about 23 percent less for HCV treatment per patient than the market rate.

So far, Connecticut has treated 1,736 Medicaid clients for hep C with new drugs and spent more than $90 million on Sovaldi alone over the last 17 months. Without discounts, new hep C cures can cost between $84,000 and $100,000 per patient for a standard 12-week course of treatment. However, over the last few months, competitive pressures have allowed many state and insurance programs to negotiate lower prices for their clients.

State Medicaid programs are legally required to provide FDA-approved medications to their patients. Unfortunately, many states have barriers put in place to discourage the use of more expensive drugs, including HCV treatment, among their low-income patients.

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