Kansas Reverses Medicaid Lifetime Ban Recommendation for Some With Hep C

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Kansas legislators have reversed their recommendation of a lifetime ban on hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment for people on Medicaid who do not adhere to their regimens, saying that it goes too far to withstand scrutiny from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), KCUR Radio reports.

Last month, a Republican-controlled committee in Kansas voted 5 to 2 to make the recommendation for its health care system. At the time, Democrats argued that the ban amounted to a "death sentence" for those living with HCV. Now, it's come to light that since the state receives more than half of its Medicaid funding from the federal government, the ban was unlikely to ever see the light of day.

Although the recommendation has been lifted, officials from the Kansas Department of Health say the state will continue enforcing statutes that ensure people on Medicaid who use alcohol or intravenous drugs won't get coverage for the treatments.

Officials cited the high cost of treatment—with some hep C treatments costing up to $1,000 a pill or up to $100,000 per patient for a standard 12-week therapy—as reason for the imposed limitations.

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