Arizona Medicaid Removes Prior Authorization Requirements for Hepatitis C Treatment

Arizona joins 15 states in streamlining access to lifesaving treatment

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The Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School (CHLPI) and the National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR) commend Arizona Medicaid for removing prior authorization requirements on hepatitis C treatment for Medicaid beneficiaries. The removal of these requirements marks a crucial step forward for health equity in Arizona, as well as on the state's journey to viral hepatitis elimination.

"Our Arizona-based studies have shown the greatest barriers to hepatitis C treatment have been requirements for prior authorization, for providers to be specialists, and for documented liver disease progression," said Dr. Beth Meyerson, director of the University of Arizona's Harm Reduction Research Lab. "Removing the need for prior authorization will expedite access to lifesaving care and help our state finally eliminate this virus."

Hepatitis C is one of the state's most commonly reported infectious diseases, estimated to affect 90,000 residents according to Arizona's Department of Health Services. Left untreated, those infections cause liver inflammation that regularly leads to liver cancer and other potentially fatal complications.

Direct-acting antivirals, which have been available since 2013, cure most HCV infections within 8 to 12 weeks, but administrative processes and arbitrary treatment eligibility requirements hinder access to these lifesaving drugs in a majority of U.S. states.

"For states that are serious about eliminating hepatitis C, removing prior authorization is absolutely crucial," said Adrienne Simmons, Director of Programs at NVHR. "Thanks to unwavering community voices, this policy change will help increase access to treatment for rural communities and decrease the burden of liver cancer in Arizona."

Arizona joins 15 other jurisdictions across the nation who have eliminated prior authorization requirements for hepatitis C treatment. As cases continue to rise, fueled by a widespread opioid crisis that shows no signs of waning, policy decisions like these will undoubtedly prove to be a

determining factor in America’s success with hepatitis C elimination.

“Removing prior authorization requirements for hepatitis C treatment is critical to adequately addressing the hepatitis C epidemic in the U.S. and saving lives,” said Robert Greenwald, Faculty Director of CHLPI. “We are thrilled that Arizona Medicaid took this important step, and we encourage other states to follow suit and support the federal government’s goal to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat.”

For more information about hepatitis C treatment access barriers, please visit here.

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