

## An FAQ on Proportion of Days Covered With Sulfonylureas

by Laura Bergs, PharmD

### WHERE DOES THIS MEASURE FIT INTO THE OVERALL MEDICARE PART D STAR RATINGS?

Sulfonylureas are one of the four drug classes found classified under the Oral Diabetes Medication Adherence Measure, which is one of five Medicare Part D Star Ratings measures that relate to pharmacy and medications.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEASURE ANALYZE?

It analyzes the percentage of patients age 18 and over who meet the proportion of days covered (PDC) threshold of 80 percent for sulfonylureas (such as glimepiride, glipizide, and glyburide). PDC is used to estimate adherence among these patients, in that a PDC closer to 100 percent means better adherence. A PDC of at least 80 percent indicates high adherence because patients have filled their prescriptions often enough to cover 80 percent of the days that they should be taking the medication, which would be 24 days in a 30-day period, or 72 days in a 90-day period. Combination drugs including sulfonylureas (such as glimepiride/pioglitazone or glyburide/metformin) are also included in this measure.

### WHAT IMPACT CAN THIS HAVE ON MY PHARMACY?

Medicare Advantage plans and Medicare prescription drug plans are incentivized to maintain high star ratings with bonus payments for doing so. Finding areas of improvement to obtain a status as a high-performing

pharmacy will increase your pharmacy's appeal to be included in these plans, and increasing the PDC of sulfonylureas is one of those opportunities for improvement.

### WHAT IMPACT DOES THIS HAVE ON PATIENT SAFETY?

Sulfonylureas are oral agents used in diabetes patients to help control their blood sugar levels. They have been shown to lower a patient's A1C by about 1.0–1.25 percentage points. As a patient's adherence decreases, the benefit of sulfonylureas on lowering a patient's A1C decreases as well. When a patient's high blood sugars go untreated for long periods of time, it can lead to neuropathy, kidney damage, retinopathy (which can lead to blindness), foot problems due to damaged nerves, and blood flow (which can lead to amputation), and infections. Conversely, overuse of sulfonylureas (indicated by a PDC of greater than 100 percent) puts a patient at risk for hypoglycemia. Strict adherence to diabetes medications such as sulfonylureas can help keep sugars under control and prevent these issues.

### WHAT CAN I DO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE IN MY PHARMACY?

MTM programs such as Mirixa® and OutcomesMTM® allow pharmacists to identify patients who have a low PDC of sulfonylureas. Patients identified may need help understanding why they are on the medication, help identifying hypoglycemia, and the consequences of non-adherence.

Additionally, any barriers to adherence can be identified and resolved. For example, if your patients are less adherent because they have transportation barriers in getting to the pharmacy to pick up their prescription on time, and your pharmacy offers delivery, you can offer that service to the patient to help improve adherence. Patients may also need to be reminded of symptoms of hypoglycemia such as shakiness, dizziness, sweating, and irritability. If a patient's adherence improves and they start experiencing these symptoms, their dose may need to be lowered. As an added bonus, these MTM programs may offer reimbursement for completed cases. It also helps to find ways to add convenience to medication regimens wherever possible, especially for patients on multiple medications, and programs such as NCPA's Simplify My Meds® allow your pharmacy to help with that. ■

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