

# HEALTH CARE IMPACT

## Improving Prescription Drug Safety

Medicare Advantage (MA) health plans in Oregon have a long track record of collaborating on quality improvement projects to benefit their members. From 2008 through 2011, Acumentra Health worked with 7 of the state's 15 MA plans to reduce potential harm from prescription drugs.

The plans identified two relevant measures that would have significant impact on their Medicare members, as described below.

### Potentially Inappropriate Medications (PIM)

The PIM measure looks at the rate of prescribing drugs that carry a high risk of harm for older patients. The MA plans identified selected skeletal muscle relaxants (SSMRs) as drugs to be avoided with older patients. Working with prescription claims from Medicare patients, the 7 plans tested several interventions to help doctors and members reduce prescription rates for these drugs.

- The project met the 28-month goal of a 5% decrease in prescriptions for these drugs. In aggregate, the 7 plans reduced the percentage of enrollees prescribed SSMRs from 4.25% to 4.01%.

### Drug-Drug Interactions (DDI)

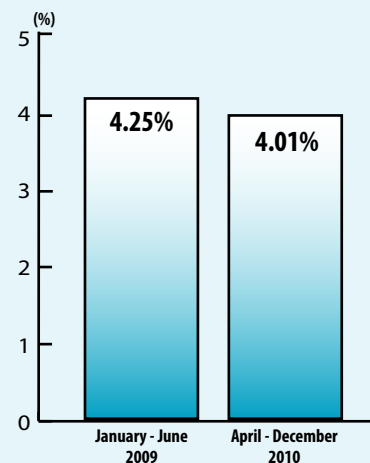
The DDI measure looks at multiple prescriptions that may have harmful interactions in older patients. The 3 MA plans in this project focused on lipid-lowering statin drugs used in combination with calcium channel blockers. Statins can cause muscle symptoms and even kidney failure; calcium channel blockers increase the risk of toxicity. The plans identified patients who had prescriptions for both types of drugs, then alerted physicians and members when these drugs appeared to be prescribed together. During the measurement period, all 3 health plans reduced the number of patients with potentially harmful interactions.

#### Using data for system change

A critical piece of the project's success was the MA plans' use of their own data to improve drug safety. Acumentra Health prepared reports from data submitted by the plans, comparing their individual results with state and national benchmarks, as well as with the plans' aggregate rate. The plans are now producing their own project data and can use proven methods to address additional medication issues.



### Oregon MA plans' performance on Potentially Inappropriate Medications measure



Source: PIM summary data provided by participating health plans.

**PIM Measure #1:** Percentage of Medicare Part D enrollees ( $\geq 65$  years of age) with at least one claim for a Part D drug who received at least one SSMR prescription. Denominator may include multiple episodes of care for a single individual.



This material was prepared by Acumentra Health, Oregon's Medicare Quality Improvement Organization, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents presented do not necessarily reflect CMS policy. 9SOW-OR-GEN-11-09 rev. 7/6/11