

Understanding

New Pharmacy Measures

FROM *HealthTeam Advantage*

Two new pharmacy measures have been introduced that aim to improve patient safety by targeting high-risk medication combinations. These measures are Anticholinergic Polypharmacy (Poly-ACH) and Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines (COB). By focusing on these measures, physicians can improve patient safety and reduce the risks associated with high-risk medication combinations. Refer to table for more details.

	Anticholinergic Polypharmacy (Poly-ACH)	Understanding the concurrent use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines (COB)
Introduction	<p>Poly-ACH (Anticholinergic Polypharmacy) refers to the simultaneous use of multiple medications with anticholinergic properties. This practice can increase the risk of adverse drug events, particularly in older adults. Understanding and managing Poly-ACH is crucial for enhancing patient safety and ensuring better clinical outcomes.</p>	<p>The Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines (COB) is a new Star measure for Medicare Part D. This measure tracks patients who are prescribed both opioids and benzodiazepines concurrently, as this combination can significantly increase the risk of adverse health outcomes.</p> <p>The goal is to reduce the unnecessary and potentially harmful concurrent prescribing of opioids and benzodiazepines, improving patient safety and care quality.</p>
Why is it important?	<p>Risks Associated with Poly-ACH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cognitive impairment and confusion - Increased risk of falls and fractures - Dry mouth, constipation, and urinary retention - Higher rates of hospitalizations <p>Patient Populations at Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Older adults - Patients with multiple chronic conditions - Individuals on long-term medication regimens 	<p>Risks of Concurrent Use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased risk of respiratory depression and overdose - Higher likelihood of falls and fractures in older adults - Greater potential for misuse, dependency, and addiction <p>Impact on Star Ratings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly affects health plan performance by monitoring safety measures - Supports initiatives to lower opioid misuse and improve patient outcomes - Enhances plan reputation and compliance with CMS guidelines
The role of Providers and Prescribers	<p>Key Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct thorough medication reviews regularly - Identify and minimize the use of unnecessary anticholinergic medications - Educate patients about the risks of poly-pharmacy - Encourage non-pharmacologic alternatives when appropriate <p>Collaboration with Pharmacists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with pharmacists to perform medication therapy management (MTM) - Develop patient-specific medication plans to reduce unnecessary anticholinergic load 	<p>Key Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carefully assess patient history before prescribing opioids or benzodiazepines - Limit concurrent prescribing unless absolutely necessary - Educate patients on the risks of combining these medications <p>Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage with pharmacists to conduct medication reviews and flag high-risk patients - Coordinate care with specialists to explore alternative treatments and non-pharmacological options

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Anticholinergic Polypharmacy AND Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines

	Anticholinergic Polypharmacy (Poly-ACH)	Understanding the concurrent use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines (COB)
Benefits	<p>Clinical Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved cognitive function and mental clarity - Reduction in falls and hospital admissions - Enhanced quality of life for patients <p>Operational Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower healthcare costs due to fewer adverse drug events - Increased patient adherence to essential medications 	<p>Clinical Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced risk of overdose and adverse drug events - Improved overall patient safety and health outcomes <p>Operational Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fewer emergency department visits and hospitalizations - Enhanced adherence to safety and quality protocols - Stronger Star ratings and improved reimbursement potential
Actionable Steps for Providers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify patients on multiple anticholinergic medications 2. Evaluate the necessity of each medication 3. Develop a tapering plan to reduce or replace anticholinergics when safe 4. Educate patients and caregivers about the importance of adherence and potential risks 5. Monitor patient progress and adjust medications as necessary 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Screen patients for opioid and benzodiazepine use during consultations 2. Develop care plans that prioritize non-opioid and non-benzodiazepine alternatives 3. Use Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) to track medication histories 4. Educate patients about safe medication use and the risks of concurrent prescriptions 5. Reassess long-term opioid and benzodiazepine users regularly to explore tapering options
Conclusion and Call-to-Action	<p>Reducing Poly-ACH is essential for improving patient outcomes and reducing healthcare costs. Providers and prescribers play a pivotal role in identifying, managing, and preventing unnecessary polypharmacy.</p> <p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement routine medication reviews in your practice - Engage in continued education on polypharmacy management - Collaborate with multidisciplinary teams to ensure comprehensive patient care 	<p>The COB measure for Part D focuses on reducing the concurrent prescribing of opioids and benzodiazepines, enhancing patient safety, and driving better health outcomes.</p> <p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrate opioid and benzodiazepine use assessments into routine practice - Engage in ongoing education regarding opioid management best practices - Collaborate with interdisciplinary teams to ensure holistic patient care and medication safety

