Assessment of a Clinical Pharmacist-Driven Appeal Process in a Dermatology Practice

Chandler Combs, PharmD; Sarah Pearce, PharmD, BCACP, CSP; Jennifer Young, PharmD, BCPS, CSP; Kathy Bricker, PharmD, BCPS; B. Kyle Hansen, PharmD, BCPS
Wake Forest Baptist Health, Winston-Salem, NC

Background
- Insurance-driven prior authorizations (PA) have become a routine requirement to accessing prescription medications.
- The goal is to review medication appropriateness, however, these processes contribute to treatment delay and can lead to frustration from patients, providers and pharmacies.
- Specialty medications are typically high cost, resulting in frequent PA requirements.
- Surveys have shown that over 60% of specialty patients had some difficulty obtaining their first dose of therapy and almost 1 in 10 patients waited 8 weeks or more to receive their first dose.1
- Current literature has focused on the benefit of adding an embedded clinic pharmacist to help with the appeal process in disease states such as hepatitis C and cardiovascular disease.2,3
- The field of dermatology presents a unique opportunity for pharmacists to be involved in the appeal process due to the increase in prescribed specialty medications for conditions like psoriasis, alopecia, atop dermatitis, hidradenitis suppurativa and vitiligo.4

Objective
Evaluate the impact of a clinic-embedded pharmacist on the rate of specialty medication appeal submission in a dermatology practice

Methods
- Retrospective, single-center review approved by the Wake Forest Baptist Health (WFBH) Institutional Review Board of adult patients with at least 1 specialty prescription medication that required a PA at the WFBH Dermatology Clinic between August 1st, 2016 and May 31st, 2019 and August 1st, 2019 to May 31st, 2020.
- Primary Endpoint: Change in the Rate of Appeals Submitted
- Secondary Endpoints: Change in the Rate of Appeal Approval, Number of Appeals Submitted, Time to Appeal Submission

Dermatology Appeal Process Workflow

Results

Rate of Appeal Submission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeals Submitted</th>
<th>Appeals Not Submitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Denied Prior Authorizations</td>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rate of appeal submission increased by 36.8% with the addition of a clinic-embedded pharmacist in the dermatology practice (20.8% vs. 57.6%, p<0.001).

Time to Appeal Submission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Time to Appeal Submission (Days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A reduction of 48.7 days was seen in the average time to appeal submission (67.6 days vs. 20.9 days, p<0.001).

Discussion
- Prevalent diagnosis codes that were observed in this review included psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, intrinsic (allergic) eczema and alopecia areata.
- The majority of appeals were completed for off-label use, formulation and step therapy requirements.
- Certain manufacturer assistance programs require 1 or 2 appeals to be completed and denied prior to providing financial assistance.
- The rate of appeal approval was higher post-intervention but was not significant which may be indicative of the inability to control the success of the appeal determination process.
- Limitations include the single-center site location, inconsistency with PA documentation pre-intervention and unequal levels of medication access education between nurses and pharmacists.

Conclusions
- The presence of a clinic-embedded pharmacist in a dermatology practice positively impacted the rate of appeal submission, the rate of appeal approval and time to appeal submission.
- Dermatology provides an optimal environment for the addition of clinical pharmacy services to assist with medication access, especially due to the increase in specialty medications for dermatologic conditions.

References

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Savannah Gallimore and the providers and staff of WFBH Dermatology Clinic – Country Club.