

Bill Reduces Ability for Medicaid Patients to Receive Non-Preferred Prescription Drugs

Feb 02, 2009 by Faroe Robinson

(KCPW News) The legislature's Senate Health and Human Services Committee approved a bill today that requires Medicaid patients to obtain pre-authorization before receiving a prescription that's not on the preferred drug list. It's meant to be a cost-saving measure for the state's Medicaid program. But Gary Thorup with pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline argued the bill would limit a patient's treatment.

"We're concerned with any legislation that would interfere with the patient and physician relationship. There are decisions being made about the patients care that are not in the control of the physician, we believe raises some red flags that should be seriously considered. I believe that the bureaucracy in slowing things down would also tend to interfere with that decision making and the implementation of the physicians decision," Thorup said.

Right now, doctors can prescribe a non-preferred drug by writing "dispense as written" on the prescription slip and justifying the medical need in the patient's chart. Bill sponsor Senator Allen Christensen says some doctors are taking advantage of this without a justifiable reason. He says this bill supports evidence-based medicine and promotes best practices.

"We feel we should get to ask why. When you want that drug, why? That's all this is saying, Why do you want it? We would like to join the rest of the states with the pre-authorization requirement because we really do need the savings and it's a place where it's effective, efficient and I hope you can agree with me on this," Christensen said.

Officials from the Utah Health Policy Project and the Utah Medical Association testified in support of the bill. It's projected to save the state's Medicaid program 1.7 million dollars. The bill will now be sent to the full Senate for a vote.