



**Optum Rx**<sup>®</sup>



# When less is best

Addressing medication overload to help reduce health risk and cost

**“Do I need so many pills?”**

**“I don’t know why I take this one.”**

**“I never thought I could stop taking this medication.”**

These are just some of the comments Optum Rx pharmacists have heard from members who take multiple medications, some of which may not be clinically necessary or beneficial.

The Optum Rx Polypharmacy Value Management program helps pharmacists, members and physicians work together to stop medications that members don’t need – and fine-tune the ones they do.

## Shared decision-making

Polypharmacy – defined as taking five or more chronic prescription medications – is a growing concern for members and plan sponsors alike<sup>1</sup>

And for good reason:



**Safety** – Each medication increases adverse drug event risk by 7-10%.<sup>2</sup>

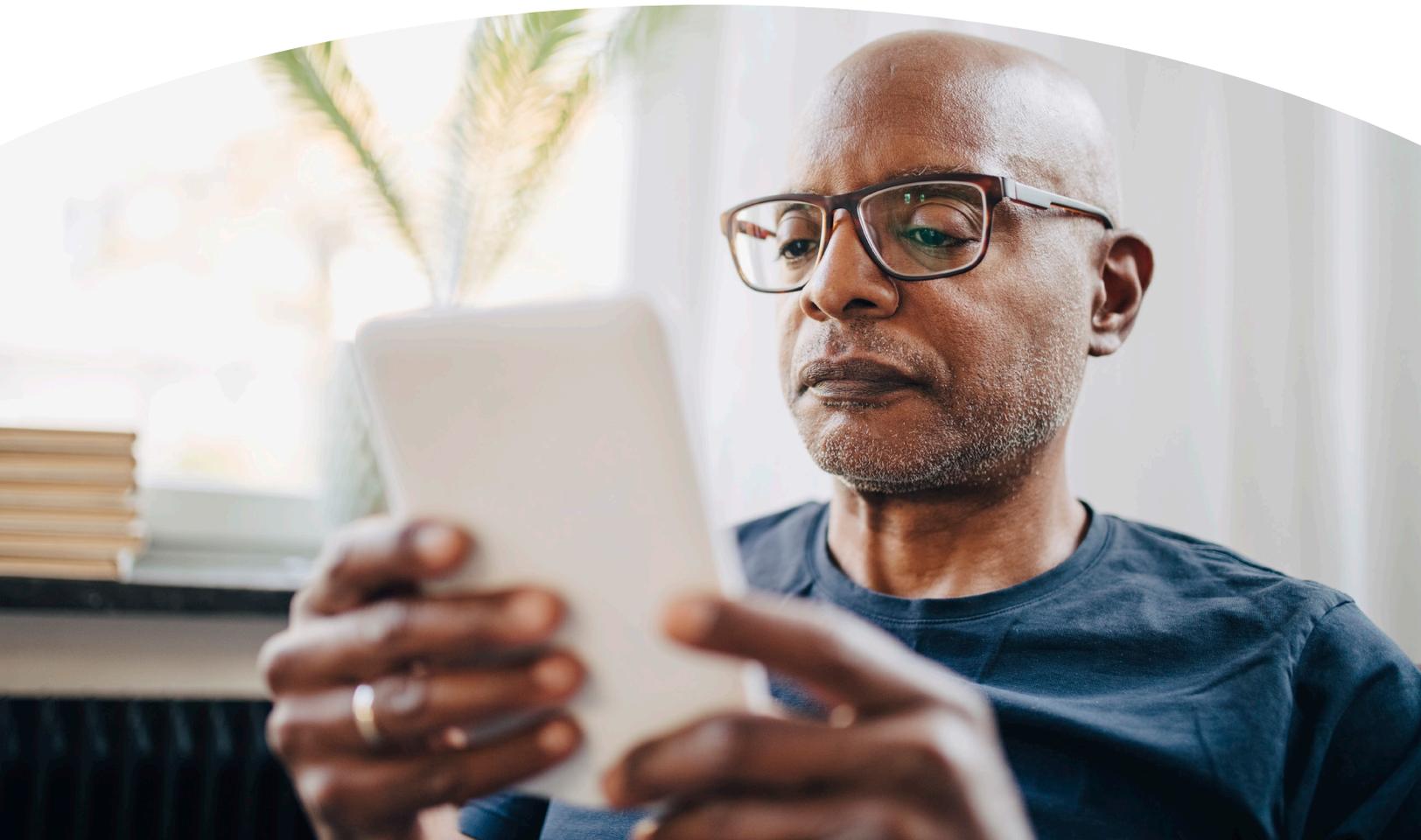


**Cost** – Adverse drug events cost an estimated \$528 billion annually in the U.S. alone.<sup>3</sup>

The Optum Rx Polypharmacy Value Management program helps reduce that health risk and cost burden by 1) identifying opportunities to stop, adjust or change medications within the polypharmacy population, and 2) enabling pharmacists, members and physicians to discuss options and take action. These conversations can help avoid and address concerns about a medication's uncertain benefits or potential for adverse events.

## Here's how the program works

The program focuses on members who take at least five chronic medications, including three that are in categories known to present deprescribing opportunities, such as sleeping pills (hypnotics), nerve-pain medications, anabolic steroids, and skeletal muscle relaxants. However, pharmacists can request physician evaluation for any medication a member is using.



## Six key steps lead to informed, shared decision-making:



### **Analytics**

The program applies integrated pharmacy and medical data to identify members most likely to benefit from a prescription checkup.



### **Member consultation**

An Optum Rx pharmacist consults with the member to gauge whether they perceive value from their ongoing treatment.



### **Pharmacist recommendation**

If the pharmacist recognizes an opportunity to adjust medication, and the member consents, the pharmacist contacts the prescriber to evaluate options such as discontinuation, dose adjustment or switching medications.



### **Post consultation**

Members get a letter that outlines:

- The medications the pharmacist sent to their provider for evaluation
- Key questions to discuss anytime they get a new prescription
- Instructions to not stop using their medications without their provider's awareness and approval



### **Provider acceptance**

The provider makes any appropriate prescription adjustments and Optum Rx follows up to see what action was taken. Optum Rx then sends the member another letter outlining the changes.



### **Measure outcomes**

Changes to prescription claims are tracked to validate outcomes.



# John, 57

Suffers from diabetes and is experiencing low blood sugar or hypoglycemia

Step

**1**

Sophisticated analytics identify that John is taking multiple medications and needs a prescription checkup.

Step

**2**

During one-on-one counseling sessions with an Optum Rx pharmacist, John shares he is taking metformin, glimepiride, and Toujeo® for diabetes. He has also lost weight and is experiencing symptoms of low blood sugar: shakiness and light headedness.

Step

**3**

The pharmacist alerts his provider to stop glimepiride and adjust Toujeo while continuing metformin for diabetes.

Step

**4**

The provider agrees to stop glimepiride and lowers John's Toujeo dose while continuing metformin. The Optum Rx pharmacist gets a confirmation of these actions.



Pharmacy savings from these changes:

**\$8,400/year** for John and his plan<sup>4</sup>

## Proven results

A **six-month** pilot of the program shows just how powerful collaborative polypharmacy management can be for members offered an evaluation of their medications<sup>5</sup>:

More than **\$1,300** average savings per successful intervention

Providers **adjusted medications** **40%** of the time

**25%** projected engagement at the 12-month mark

**7** medications reviewed per consultation

## About Optum Rx

Optum Rx is a pharmacy care services company helping clients and more than 60 million members achieve better health outcomes and lower overall costs through innovative prescription drug benefits services.



### Delivering care without compromise

Your employees and your organization deserve affordable clinical solutions that drive positive outcomes. Optum Rx can help you find the balance. To learn more, contact us at [optumrx@optum.com](mailto:optumrx@optum.com)



#### Sources

1. Halli-Tierney A, Scarborough C, Carroll D. Polypharmacy: Evaluating Risks and Deprescribing. Am Fam Physician. Published July 1, 2019. Accessed June 9, 2022.
2. Lown Institute. Medication overload: America's other drug problem. <https://lowninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/medication-overload-lown-web.pdf>. Published April 2019. Accessed June 9, 2022.
3. Watanabe J, McInnis T, Hirsch J. Cost of Prescription Drug-Related Morbidity and Mortality. Ann Pharmacother. 2018; 52(9):829-837.
4. Optum Rx pilot program. Based on an actual member experience. Name and picture are altered for privacy purposes. Data from January-June 2021.
5. Optum Rx pilot program. 12.5% engagement after six-month pilot program. Data from January-June 2021.