

Advisory Board on Alcoholism  
and Drug Abuse



Alaska Mental Health Board

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD  
ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE  
431 NORTH FRANKLIN STREET, SUITE 200  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801  
(907) 465-8920

March 5, 2013

Representative Mia Costello  
Alaska Capitol Room  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HB 134 — Reimbursement of Scheduled Unit Dose Packaging

Dear Representative Costello,

The Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse support HB 134 requiring reimbursement of “mediset” packaging for prescription medications. Over the past several years, the Boards have previously received significant comment and information from consumers, providers, and pharmacies on this issue. All expressed the importance of having access to a proven tool – mediset packaging – for medication adherence and stability for Alaskans experiencing serious mental illness.

Mediset packaging may seem like an ancillary service provided by pharmacists, but for many, this sort of packaging is a much-needed support to maintaining the ability to function. Many Alaskans experiencing serious mental illness are on complex and delicately calibrated psychiatric medication regimens, often further complicated with medications for co-morbid conditions. There is recent research, as well as ongoing federally-funded research, studying the impact of packaging aids on medication adherence.

For Alaskans experiencing serious mental illness, often with co-morbid conditions, medication adherence is paramount to achieving and maintaining the highest level of functioning and recovery possible. **Blister-pack packaging**, combined with medication education and regular follow-up with clinical pharmacists, has been shown to improve medication compliance among elderly patients.<sup>1</sup> Adherence to medication regimens depends on the severity of the mental health disorder, patient characteristics, and patient-provider relationships.<sup>2</sup> It requires “constant vigilance, health teaching – both verbal and written – enlisting the help of family and community to provide supervision, **simplification of drug regimens**, frequent examination and vigorous treatment of side effects, and improving the patient-therapist interaction.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, access to mediset packaging is a key component to achieving recovery.

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<sup>1</sup> *Effect of a Pharmacy Care Program on Medication Adherence and Persistence, Blood Pressure, and Low-Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol: A Randomized Controlled Trial*, Lee, J. et al., JAMA, Dec. 6, 2006, Vol. 296, No. 21; *Antidepressant Adherence after Psychiatric Hospitalization*, Zivin, K. et al., *Adm Policy Ment Health*, Nov. 2009 36(6): 406-415.

<sup>2</sup> *Drug Compliance and the Psychiatric Patient*, Selter, A. and Hoffman, B., *Can Fam Physician*. 1980 May; 26: 725-727.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 725.

Adherence-promoting packages, like blister-packs and medisets, have been shown effective in increasing medication adherence rates. Medication adherence is an integral part of achieving and maintaining the highest level of functioning and health possible. HB 134 ensures continued access to this important service for Alaska's most vulnerable citizens.

The Boards appreciate your work on behalf of Alaskans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Kerosky". The script is cursive and fluid.

Michael Kerosky, Chairman  
Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brenda Moore". The script is cursive and elegant.

Brenda Moore, Chairperson  
Alaska Mental Health Board