



# UNDERSTANDING HEALTH INSURANCE

BY IRENE C. CARD and BETSY D. CHANDLER

## HOW TO GET HELP PAYING FOR PRESCRIPTIONS

PROFESSIONALISM

EXPERTISE

PERSONAL SERVICE

www.micinsurance.com

Paying for prescriptions can be quite a challenge for many people who have limited incomes or health insurance that has prescription coverage after a high deductible or a plan with very high copays. Seniors, especially, have problems paying for drugs when they reach the coverage gap (also known as the donut hole) with Part D Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage.

You do have several options. If you are 65 or over or are disabled you may qualify for PAAD (Pharmaceutical Assistance for the Aged and Disabled). If you are single your income cannot exceed \$24,432 and if you are married, your income cannot exceed \$29,956. You can pick up an application in any pharmacy; just ask for a PAAD application or you can go on line to their website <http://www.state.nj.us/health/seniorbenefits/paad.shtml> for more information and an application. If you qualify for assistance, you will only pay \$6.00 for generic drugs and \$7 for brand name prescriptions. The state of NJ pays the balance. This program is only for NJ residents.

For those of you under the age of 65, comparison shopping is a must. Usually we find that Costco is cheaper than anyone else for the majority of drugs that we have price-checked.

Some people are still ordering their drugs from Canada. This was very popular before the government gave us Part D Medicare prescription drug coverage. The government has now made it illegal to import drugs from Canada but I hear of many people still doing it. You run the risk of having the U.S. Customs office confiscating the drugs when the package goes through Customs.

Most pharmaceutical companies have a program to assist individuals with paying for their drugs if they have a limited income or if their insurance company doesn't pay. Find out who manufactures your drugs and then go to the website of that company and research what types of financial assistance are available. For example, Lipitor is made by Pfizer. Go to [www.pfizer.com](http://www.pfizer.com) and look for their information on financial assistance. All the leading manufacturers do this.

While doing some research for this article, I discovered a most interesting website – [www.freemedicinefoundation.com](http://www.freemedicinefoundation.com). There are government incentives for pharmaceutical companies to provide you with free medications if you don't have enough money to pay for your prescriptions, if you are under-insured or have high deductibles and co-payments, your drugs are not covered by your insurance, or you have no insurance.



# UNDERSTANDING HEALTH INSURANCE

BY IRENE C. CARD and BETSY D. CHANDLER

PROFESSIONALISM

EXPERTISE

PERSONAL SERVICE

[www.micinsurance.com](http://www.micinsurance.com)

This program might be just what you are looking for. They charge a one-time fee of \$10 per prescription drug and I believe that will enable you to get that prescription for one full year. If you are on 5 drugs, it will cost you \$50 a year, etc. Participation in this program is based on income. If you are single, your income must be less than \$43,430, for couples, the income must be less than \$ 58,280 and for families of four, income must be under \$88,200. You can call 1-573-996-3333 for a brochure or go to their web site that is shown above. We are not endorsing this program in any way. My goal is to let you know that there are programs available to help you with the high cost of your drugs. All too often I hear of people not taking their medications because they can't afford them. This may be a solution. You must research this program carefully and make sure it is the right choice for you. I discovered another website that charged a monthly fee for each prescription and that could end up being so costly that it would defeat its own purpose. Be careful what you sign up for; read the small print.

Irene Card & Betsy Chandler are licensed insurance professionals working at MIC Insurance Services, a health insurance services company. If you have questions relative to this column or other related topics, we invite you to call (973) 492-2828. You may also access our library of past columns on our web site: [www.micinsurance.com](http://www.micinsurance.com).