Step Therapy (Fail First)

**Position:** The National MS Society supports appropriate step therapy protections to ensure that people with MS can get access to the medications they need, without detrimental delays.

### Background on Step Therapy

- Step therapy protocols (sometimes referred to as “fail first”) require patients to try and fail at least one medication chosen by the health plan before the plan will cover the medication that was originally prescribed.

**Step therapy or “fail first” protocols are often utilized by insurers to review the use of prescribed treatments and control costs.**

- The health plan may require a patient to try a lower-cost drug or service for a certain period of time, before they will provide coverage for a more expensive option.

- If the health plan's preferred treatment is ineffective or harmful, the plan may authorize payment for the provider-prescribed treatment.

- Step therapy protocols vary in terms of their requirements—for example, how many “steps”, or different medications, a patient must cycle through, or how long the process takes.

- Health plans’ exceptions procedures vary widely in terms of how clear and accessible they are, and how often physicians’ requests are approved or denied.

**People with MS and their healthcare providers have voiced concern about the potential effects step therapy may have on their lives and health outcomes.**

- Step therapy requirements may involve significant paperwork and result in lengthy delays before people are able to receive the treatment deemed appropriate by their healthcare provider.

- For those with diseases such as MS, prolonging ineffective treatment (and delaying access to the right treatment) may result in disease progression, relapses and worsening disability, or other damage from the disease. The initiation of treatment with an FDA-approved disease-modifying treatment is recommended as soon as possible following a diagnosis of relapsing MS.

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**What is multiple sclerosis (MS)?**

- MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system.

- MS interrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body.

- Symptoms range from numbness and tingling to blindness and paralysis.

- The progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted.

**Step Therapy Reform Legislation (A4815/S3051)**

- This measure would ensure that health plans’ treatment decisions for New Jerseyans are based on high-quality research and medical expertise.

- It would improve the process allowing providers to request an exception to the step therapy process for patients, if it could be ineffectual or damaging for them.

- Would also require that the step therapy exceptions process be transparent and accessible, so as not to delay necessary treatments, and would strengthen the state’s role in oversight.

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