

Drug Effectiveness Review Project (DERP)

Summary prepared by WCD August 2006

Purpose

The Drug Effectiveness Review Project (**DERP**) is a collaborative partnership among states and other government and nonprofit entities that conducts systemic evidence-based reviews of pharmaceuticals. There are 16 members, a majority of which are state Medicaid programs. It is the largest effort to apply current best practices and evidence-based analysis to pharmacy management issues. DERP is administered at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) and was pioneered by the administration of John Kitzhaber in 1999. It was transferred from the state to OHSU in 2004; OHSU's Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) provides oversight. DERP has developed 25 drug class reviews; each review is updated based on new evidence every seven to 24 months. These drug classes account for more than half of all drug utilization.

DERP's overall approach is to develop information on drug effectiveness globally – drawing on financial support and intellectual input from member organizations. Those organizations use the global information (drug class reviews) in their own way to make decisions about such management tools as preferred drug lists.

Drug class reviews

Drug class reviews use research from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Reviews include a literature search. Researchers select articles according to specified criteria, then review and rate them for their quality. Two reviewers abstract the data from the included studies, allowing the research team to synthesize the results in different ways. The research team focuses on the outcomes of using particular drugs.

Participating organizations consider the following when selecting drug classes for review:

- Drug classes that account for a significant amount of the pharmaceutical budget
- Drug classes with multiple drugs
- Drugs that are being used for off-label purposes
- Drug classes with recent additions of similar drugs
- Drugs in a significantly expensive class

Drugs are considered only if approved for use in jurisdictions of participating organizations.

What value does the DERP collaboration offer to participating states?

- Provides indispensable information in their efforts to use clinical evidence in managing the Medicaid pharmacy benefit
- Provides the primary source of information for evaluating the evidence base for specific drug classes and to validate the member organization's own evidence-based reviews
- Assists states in organizing their Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committees

- Allows participants to be in a stronger position to guide their state colleagues as they use reviews to make policy regarding preferred drug lists and other cost-management tools

DERP's reports – credibility and acceptability

- DERP research reports provide states with a level of credibility that pharmacy management decisions are based on clinical evidence.
- Additionally, the reports help gain support or limit opposition from physicians and pharmacists because they inform a state's decision makers without taking decision-making out of their hands.
- Pharmaceutical companies have shown an increased willingness to accept the legitimacy of the DERP review process.

Conclusion

DERP is a novel collaboration among certain states and other participating organizations to support systematic reviews of the comparative effectiveness of prescription drugs. Part of the value for states is that the collaboration can be whatever states collectively decide to prioritize and support. While just a few years old, the collaboration is clearly valued by participants for its support of state efforts to manage the Medicaid pharmacy benefit. While this project did not formally evaluate the collaboration or exhaustively examine critiques leveled at DERP's evidence-based reviews, it lends support to the DERP model as a way to incorporate clinical evidence when setting Medicaid pharmacy policies.