



How to make your pharmacy benefit plan work better for you

4 key questions you should ask



Key questions

Here are the four key questions you should ask to make sure your pharmacy benefit is working for you.



If your pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) is not actively adding value to your benefit plan, you're not getting your money's worth.

For decades, PBMs have been rated mainly on how well they control prescription drug costs.¹ This stance is still very prominent today among PBM industry groups and consultants.^{2,3}

Of course, controlling costs is important. But the truth is that PBMs should **add value**, not merely reduce costs.

Adding value can mean reducing waste, or finding the best care for patients with complex specialty needs. It can also mean digging deep into the details of how medications are paid for – and much more.

Correctly managing these and other issues can make a big difference in your plan costs. Is your PBM giving you the strategic guidance and tools to take advantage of every saving opportunity?

PBMs should:



Promote value



Drive innovation



Improve health outcomes

1 How can I be sure my prescription benefit dollars are not going to waste?

At Optum Rx, waste prevention is part of how we go about our business.



One obvious source of waste is fraud. It's estimated that up to **10% of total annual health spending is lost** through fraudulent activity.

That's \$300 billion each year.⁴

Optum Rx Standard Audit Services can help you reduce losses from fraud, waste and abuse. Our highly automated audit process **evaluates every claim within three seconds**. These audits result in millions of dollars returned to our clients. And pharmacies that continue to violate their contracts can be removed from the network.

The best part? Standard Pharmacy Audit Services are available at no cost to you. [\(An advanced offering is also available.\)](#)

But Optum Rx waste prevention doesn't just happen in specific programs. It's baked in to our whole approach.

Continued...



1 How can I be sure my prescription benefit dollars are not going to waste?

Next, the **Optum Rx Premium Value Formulary** excludes medications that offer little or no clinical advantage, yet have higher costs and historically aggressive rebates for placement on formularies.⁵

Instead, Premium Value focuses on a limited number of clinically proven therapies for any given condition. [It rewards manufacturers that offer effective medications at the lowest net cost.](#) As a result, the Premium Value formulary has demonstrated up to 10% net savings compared to our standard Premium formulary.⁶

Our **Optum Rx Vigilant Drug Program**[®] is another way to make sure your dollars aren't going to waste. For example, why pay for branded cholesterol medications priced close to \$2,000? There are generic versions with the **exact same ingredients** that cost only **\$11.**⁷ The Vigilant Drug Program list eliminates wasteful spending by limiting access to medications that offer nothing more than added cost.



When taken in its entirety, the **Vigilant Drug Program** has shown average savings of **\$6.00** per member per month (PMPM)

in the first year and \$2.50 PMPM for every year after.⁸



2 How can I find high quality, cost-effective care for my members who have the most complex needs?

Polypharmacy

Patients with complex conditions usually have other conditions. Together, they may take over 10 medications a year and see more than four different prescribers.⁹ But people's health needs aren't static. Once prescribed, a medication may become unnecessary or ineffective. Yet patients continue to take them, which can be costly and dangerous.

[The Polypharmacy Value Management program identifies opportunities to stop, adjust or remove harmful medications.](#) Our pharmacists work with members and their providers to identify ineffective or unsafe treatments.

Stopping unwarranted medications improves health outcomes and reduces member and plan sponsor costs. On average this program saves \$1,300 per successful intervention.¹⁰

Continued...



2 How can I find high quality, cost-effective care for my members who have the most complex needs?

Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes may not seem like a complex condition, but it is. **The Optum Rx Diabetes Management program** helps people with diabetes live healthier lives, reduce complications and avoid progression to more complicated conditions.

We know that controlling blood sugar (A1c) can mean a higher quality of life and lower hospitalization rates. But many patients struggle to stay adherent to their medications. As many as **60% of patients with type 2 diabetes may not be taking their medications as prescribed.**¹¹

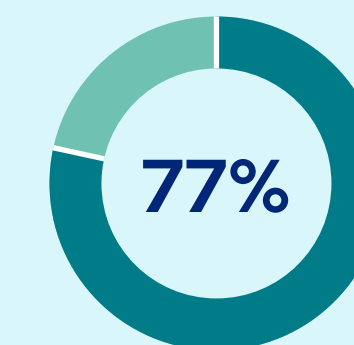
The Optum Rx Diabetes Management program employs machine learning to understand each member's risk. This helps us provide personalized care, education and counseling.

For example, **low-risk** members need education and tools that help these people stay adherent to their treatment.

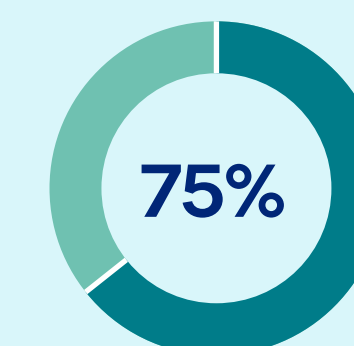
Alternatively, **high-risk** members may need one-on-one conversations with a pharmacist and certified diabetes specialist. We can also arrange free blood glucose monitors, supplies and other support.*

*Complimentary supplies are an optional feature in the Diabetes Management program and align with the member's formulary. By opting into this feature, clients are responsible for the member copay on the member's behalf. Depending on plan design and benefit setup, a deductible may apply before \$0 copay applies on testing supplies.

This flexible support system delivers proven results:¹²



77% of program participants experienced improved A1c



75% success converting nonadherent diabetic members to adherent



\$1.40 PMPM average savings

3 Is my PBM thinking about all of health care, or just pharmacy?

Almost 40% of total specialty drug spend occurs under the medical benefit. Typical medical claim payers may not have the infrastructure, experience or volume to manage or negotiate medication costs.

[Optum® Specialty Medication Management](#) offers solutions to manage across **both medical and pharmacy benefits**:

Medical management:

Helping members find lower-cost sites of care for infusions can save money – for them and the plan.

We can help lower the cost of some specialty drugs by shifting them from the medical benefit to the pharmacy benefit.

The Optum MedicalRx Specialty Provider Network helps control costs with contracted rates for certain infused or injected medications.

Pharmacy benefit specialty management:

Our **variable copay program** helps employer plans recover the full value the available manufacturers' copay cards when member copays are lower than the total copay card.

Accumulator adjustment can remove the drug manufacturer copay card dollar amount from the members' deductible and out-of-pocket maximum.

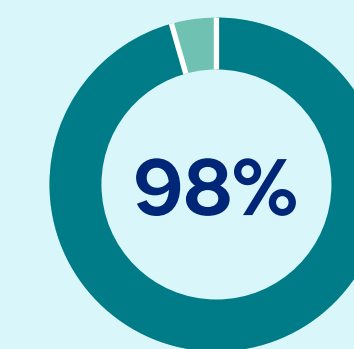
Cross-benefit specialty management:

Optum Specialty Fusion™ and Optum Specialty Compass™ power data-driven cost-management decisions across medical and pharmacy benefit strategies

Better decisions result in a better experience



9 out of 10 clients expressed their satisfaction with our clinical insights and recommendations.¹³



More than **98%** client retention annually.¹⁴

4 Is my PBM giving me strategic guidance?

There is no one silver bullet to meet the challenge of high-cost specialty therapies and the conditions they treat. Plan sponsors need a broad, flexible portfolio of strategies.

Trusted expertise

Your Optum Rx account team will focus on identifying key insights that are relevant now, and into the future. These customized strategies are the foundation to managing your medication spending while ensuring high quality care.

Our clients consistently rate our service teams high on accessibility and accountability. Also, 9 out of 10 clients expressed their satisfaction with our clinical insights and recommendations, with more than 98% client retention annually.^{13,14}

More than just a good feeling

While great relationships make any partnership easier, results are what really matter. And we have found that when our clients trust us to guide them with these important programs, they see significant cost savings.

Optum Rx clients who adopt highly-managed programs – such as the ones mentioned in this guide – can expect to see **\$22 PMPM** savings over clients with fewer pharmacy management programs.¹⁵ Optum Rx extends its focus far beyond utilization management and reducing the unit cost of medications to deliver increased value. Our approach provides integrated clinical support for both the providers who choose the medications and the patients who take them.



Explore more



[Reach out](#) to discuss the full range of cost-saving solutions we offer.



Stay informed on [pharmacy trends, industry news and Optum Rx innovations](#).



Visit optum.com/optumrx.

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.



References

1. The American Journal of Managed Care. [A Blueprint for Pharmacy Benefit Managers to Increase Value](#). Published February 14, 2009. Accessed April 29, 2022.
2. PCMA. [The Value of PBMs](#). Accessed April 29, 2022.
3. The Alliance. [Add Value to Pharmacy Benefit by Driving Out Waste](#). Published March 1, 2021. Accessed April 29, 2022.
4. National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association. [The Challenges of Health Care Fraud](#). Accessed May 13, 2022. [NPS survey] 2021 Optum Rx commissioned study. Competitive NPS Survey of 351 healthcare decision makers.
5. Optum Rx. Commercial book of business. Premium savings based on fourth quarter. 2020.
6. The full utilization management (UM) suite is included in the Premium Value formulary. UM may also be added to the Select or Premium formularies for clinical management.
7. Red Book. Average wholesale pricing. Q1 2021.
8. Optum Rx. Direct commercial book of business client data. January to December 2022.
9. Data from January 2021 - June 2021 Optum Rx pilot program.
10. Ibid.
11. [Frontiers of Public Health. Medication Adherence and Associated Factors in Patients with Type 2 Diabetes: A Structural Equation Model](#). Published November 4, 2021. Accessed May 18, 2022.
12. Optum Rx. Commercial direct client book of business analysis. Results may vary based on intervention opportunities and member engagement. January 2022-July 2022.
13. Optum Rx. NPS Client Survey. 2023.
14. Optum Rx book of business. 2023.
15. Highly managed savings of \$22 PMPM is based on an analysis of 645K highly managed members (premium formulary, comprehensive utilization, full vigilant drug program, and variable copay program) compared to member cohorts with less management between January 2022 and October 2022.



Images throughout this e-book are stock and illustrative only.

All Optum trademarks and logos are owned by Optum, Inc., in the U.S. All other brand or product names are trademarks or registered marks of their respective owners. © 2024 Optum, Inc. All rights reserved. WF13229025-CV_240315