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Don't Let The High Cost Of Prescription Drugs Cost You Your Health *Warns The Senior Citizens League*

(Washington, DC) – For older Americans, the high cost of prescription drugs is a leading deterrent to filling prescriptions or taking required medications as directed, warns The Senior Citizens League. “People with Medicare coverage should take time now during the Medicare Fall Open Enrollment period to learn about the changes in their Medicare drug coverage for 2018 and to shop for a better plan,” urges [The Senior Citizens League’s](#) Medicare policy analyst, Mary Johnson.

“Because Medicare is forbidden by law from negotiating Part D drug prices, there is no consistency in drug pricing among drug plans,” Johnson says. “There can be dramatically large variations among what different plans charge for the same drug.”

Over the past 12 years, Johnson has worked as a volunteer Medicare “navigator” helping family, friends, and neighbors to compare drug and health plans and make better choices about their coverage for the following year. Earlier this year, Johnson performed a study comparing the highest and lowest costs of ten of the nation’s most frequently prescribed drugs among the 23 drug plans. The study included the cost of monthly premiums and deductibles, just as one would find when shopping for a Part D plan on the Medicare drug plan finder. Johnson found that the highest drug prices averaged 7.5 times more than the lowest, which varied widely from plan to plan. “There was no single drug plan that won an award for low prices for all the pharmaceuticals in this study,” she says.

For example, a 30 - day supply of levothyroxine, the generic for Synthroid a common thyroid drug, ranged from \$17 (\$0 co-pay, plus the \$17 monthly premium) in the lowest costing plan, to \$151.50 in the highest costing plan. Asthma drug Advair Diskus ranged in cost from \$85.50 to \$856.25. Diabetes drug Lantus Solostar ranged in cost from \$77.75 to \$682.00. “This is why it pays to compare plans,” Johnson notes.

The Senior Citizens League strongly recommends that every person with Medicare coverage do a drug plan comparison using Medicare’s “Drug and Health Plan Finder” at www.Medicare.gov. “You might find other price comparison tools online, but Medicare’s tool will show all the options in your zip code and county,” Johnson says. Other online tools may not be as complete or show all the options.

Go to www.Medicare.gov and click on “find drug and health plans.” The search is customized to your zip code, county of residence, whether you are enrolled in original Medicare with a Part D plan, or a Medicare Advantage plan that includes Part D coverage, all the drugs you currently take on a regular basis, and pharmacy choices. (There is a video to help you get started.) It’s important to do a search based on all the drugs you normally take. Have a complete list with correct spelling of drug names, dosages, and quantity you use per month.

If you have difficulties, free help is available. Contact your State Health Insurance Program, which operates through many local agencies on aging and senior centers. Or call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116. But make an appointment now, because Open Enrollment ends December 7th.

The Senior Citizens League supports legislation that would allow Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices. The Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act (S. 41, H.R. 242) and the Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act (S. 771, H.R. 1776) would both reduce prescription drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries by allowing the government to negotiate lower prices.

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With 1.2 million supporters, The Senior Citizens League is one of the nation’s largest nonpartisan seniors groups. Its mission is to promote and assist members and supporters, to educate and alert senior citizens about their rights and freedoms as U.S. Citizens, and to protect and defend the benefits senior citizens have earned and paid for. The Senior Citizens League is a proud affiliate of [The Retired Enlisted Association](#). Visit www.SeniorsLeague.org for more information.