

The logo for the North Carolina State Health Plan features a light blue semi-circular background. Inside the semi-circle, the words "North Carolina" are written in a smaller, blue, serif font, and "State Health Plan" is written in a larger, bold, blue, serif font below it.

*North Carolina*  
**State Health Plan**

for Teachers and State Employees

[www.shpnc.org](http://www.shpnc.org)

## **New Pharmacy Programs (Pending P&T Committee approval)**

### **Angiotensin Receptor Blocker (ARB) Step Therapy Program**

The ARB class of antihypertensive medications includes seven brand medications. Next spring a generic for Cozaar and Hyzaar will become available. In order to promote the use of the generics and preferred medications in this class, the Plan proposes to implement a step therapy program on April 1, 2010. In addition to the step therapy the Plan proposes to change some of the preferred drugs in this class to maximize Plan savings. Diovan/HCT and Micardis/HCT will be the only brand preferred ARBs. Atacand/HCT and Benicar/HCT will no longer be preferred. There are no major clinical differences between these medications except that Atacand/HCT has clinical data to support it reducing the risk of death from cardiovascular causes and reducing hospitalizations for heart failure. There will be a provision in the program to allow this medication for heart failure patients.

This program may impact approximately 17,000 members with a projected Plan savings of \$2 million the first year.

### **Forteo Step Therapy Program**

Forteo is an injectable, specialty medication for the treatment of osteoporosis. This step therapy program is proposed to ensure the use of oral bisphosphonates first prior to allowing coverage for Forteo, and it will limit therapy to the approved indicated 2 years. This program may impact approximately 250 members with a projected Plan savings of \$400,000 the first year.

### **Over-the-counter Heartburn Medication Coverage**

The Plan has been covering Prilosec OTC as a pharmacy benefit for a \$5 copay/42 day supply since it became available in 2005. This benefit allowance has proved financially beneficial to the Plan and to members. In November 2009, Prevacid (Lansoprazole) 15mg 24HR capsules will become available as an OTC product at an expected much lower price than its equivalent prescription brand and generic products. In order to encourage its use and maximize Plan savings, it is proposed that the Plan also allow coverage for Prevacid 24HR starting on 1/1/10, and also according to new statutory language, block coverage of equivalent prescription brand and generic products on 2/1/10. Zegerid (Omeprazole/sodium bicarbonate) is also expected to become available in the near future and it would also prove beneficial to offer Zegerid as a benefit as well when it becomes available.

The Plan will announce the OTC availability of these heartburn medications to all users of heartburn medications and will also send notifications to prescription Prevacid 15mg capsule and Zegerid 20mg users about the coverage change to the OTC products only. This benefit change could save Prevacid and Zegerid users over \$600 per year. The Plan could save over \$1M the first year if all users of all strengths of Prevacid and Zegerid switched to the OTC products.