



HealthPolCom Case Study

Opposed Restrictive Formulary

Situation: The pharmaceutical industry needed to respond to the Department of Veterans Affairs' implementation of a national formulary that was restricting access to novel medicines through a silo-budget driven cost containment process. The industry needed to demonstrate that the quality of care for Veterans was being jeopardized by the VA's budget-driven formulary decisions and treatment guidelines.

Actions: Conducted economic analyses refuting the VA's hyper-inflated cost estimates, and developed good relationships with the key patient and physician advocacy groups - including working with the company's alliance development group to resurrect a patient-focused Veterans coalition. This coalition supported our efforts by advocating for increased research and analysis about access and quality problems within the VA healthcare system.

Worked with company sales representatives responsible for the VA to collect information about problems with the VA's national formulary, including information from physicians who felt that the quality of clinical care was being compromised. As one physician wrote, "We need to stop this before someone is killed."

Initiated and managed a survey of VA physicians conducted by a national polling firm that gathered quantitative data and key quotes about access and quality problems arising from the formulary's restrictions. This polling also identified case reports of poor outcomes and adverse effects.

Produced an extensive briefing binder documenting the quality of care problems with the VA's national formulary that supported advocates' efforts in challenging the VA's formulary practices. The materials in this binder also initiated an investigative TV news report about adverse events from the VA's therapeutic substitution practices.

Worked directly with Members of Congress, Congressional staff and other allies to scrutinize and challenge the VA health system's actions.

Outcome: Established effective ally relationships, and engaged them to create advocacy activities that increased formulary access within VA health system.

Members of Congress directed the Institute of Medicine and the General Accountability Office to study the effects of VA's access restrictions on the quality of care. These studies documented the VA's problems in monitoring and evaluating quality issues and problems related to their national formulary, and I testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee about the implications of these studies for the quality of care for Veterans.

Tens of millions of dollars of sales for two of the company's novel medicines were preserved, and one of the company's new medicines - that was eagerly sought by and appropriate for many veterans - saw accelerated formulary adoption and sales.