



## HEALTH BENEFITS REPORT – By Al Raitt

This month I'd like to share with you information about a web site that provides costs for medications. It is [www.GoodRx.com](http://www.GoodRx.com). I became aware of this site while hearing about the experience that a member of the statewide RPEA Health Benefits Committee was having while trying to obtain prescribed medications following back surgery.

She was trying to have the prescriptions filled through our current health benefits manager (HBM) OptumRx, and she was experiencing considerable delays in obtaining the prior authorizations (PA's) necessary to have the prescriptions filled. Her health care provider was providing the information to OptumRx in a timely manner; however, OptumRx was telling her that it would take two to three weeks for the PA request to be processed; and in the mean time, as far as OptumRx was concerned, she was simply going to have to endure the pain and other discomfort until the PA request was completed. (You may recall that in a newsletter article several months ago I listed delays in the PA process as one of the major complaints that members had about getting their prescriptions filled.)

She ended up checking with various pharmacies about paying the "full cost" of the medications instead of trying to go through OptumRx; and she discovered that, in at least two instances, she could have the prescription filled for about double the amount of what the copay through OptumRx would have been. In round figures, she paid about \$10 for what would have been a \$5 copay via OptumRx; and in the other instance she paid about \$15 for what otherwise have been a \$7.50 copay. Granted these were "generic" (vs. "brand name") medications, so the cost was fairly low to

begin with; but by paying double the amount, she was able to get the medications the same day instead of having to wait the two to three weeks, and she thought it was well worth the relatively small increased costs to experience more immediate pain relief.

While pondering her situation I happened to hear about this web site at the end of a major network newscast, and I thought it relevant to the situation described above.

Space limitations for this article does not allow for a detailed description of what the web site offers; but basically, one can enter the name, strength, and number of capsules or tablets desired, click on a link for "local pharmacies," and be provided with the cost at each listed pharmacy. The site only covers national "chain" pharmacies such as CVS, Costco, Raleys, Rite-Aid, Safeway, Walgreens and Wal-Mart; however, if desired, one could contact one of the local pharmacies such as Apothecary Options, Bidwell Pharmacy, Chico Pharmacy, Kind Care Pharmacy, Next-Door Pharmacy and Owen's Pharmacy.

Using a combination of the website and directly contacting local pharmacies may yield information about considerable savings at one pharmacy compared with another. Good hunting!

### **INTERESTED IN SERVING ON THE BOARD?**

New officers will be elected at the November meeting. We want to start looking for new leadership between now and then. Please contact one of our Chapter 77 Board members if you are interested in becoming an officer and serving on the Board.