



December 06, 2022

Amy Bricker
President, Express Scripts
1 Express Way
St. Louis, MO 63121

David Cordani
Chairman & CEO, Cigna Corporation
900 Cottage Grove Road
Bloomfield, CT 06002

Dear Ms. Bricker and Mr. Cordani:

We are writing today to express our concerns with the recently implemented pharmacy network changes by Cigna/Express Scripts which are already impacting 400,000 TRICARE beneficiaries. Cigna/Express Scripts' decision to shrink TRICARE's retail network by almost 15,000 pharmacies in October – and leaving only one specialty pharmacy, Accredo in network – seriously reduces access for TRICARE beneficiaries. Although we have seen messaging that alleges pharmacies “chose” not to participate in the network, the fact that even large corporations like Kroger found the contract terms unsustainable underscores the problem with the contract, including below cost reimbursements. Further, although a “new” solicitation for the TRICARE pharmacy network was recently sent out, our members report that the contracts are virtually identical in terms of reimbursements to the ones sent out this summer, which would likely reimburse well below cost for many prescription medications.

TRICARE patients earned their benefits, and it is imperative that they retain convenient access to their health care providers especially those with whom they have established, trusted relationships. Independent community and specialty pharmacies take great pride in caring for those who honorably serve or have served in our armed forces. Independent pharmacies go above and beyond in providing many acute care medications, as well as generic medications and other important health care services. Specialty pharmacy cares for some of the most severely ill service members and their families, including those with complex health conditions including cancer, multiple sclerosis, and HIV among other conditions, and ensures that patients stay adherent to their medications and ultimately healthy, reducing total health care expenditures.

For many TRICARE beneficiaries, their pharmacists become a part of their trusted medical team. The relationship between a patient and pharmacist is built over years, and often becomes a source of important medical information. In many rural areas, pharmacists are the only local health care touch for TRICARE enrollees. For TRICARE enrollees who use specialty pharmacies, they rely on their pharmacists to optimize their therapy, keep them on their medications, and ultimately ensure better clinical outcomes. The relationships between pharmacists and patients are built on trust, and for many patients is not something easily transferrable. Keeping patients' trusted pharmacies in network is critical to the patients' care.

Without access to the pharmacy of their choice TRICARE patients will suffer. Most of the pharmacies excluded from the network are specialty pharmacies or pharmacies located in underserved rural and urban areas. Several patients have gone public with their frustrations with the changes and their experiences, including:

- Cigna/Express Scripts [hindering access](#) to necessary cancer medications.
- Cigna/Express Scripts providing [unacceptable alternatives](#) to their independent pharmacy.
- Cigna/Express Scripts giving [very short notice](#) to affected patients to find a new pharmacy given the accelerated effective date.
- Questions over whether clinically complex patients will be [able to receive their specialty medications](#) from Accredo before January 1.
- Cigna/Express Scripts [threatening continuity of care](#), resulting in more patients with complex medical conditions ending up in hospitals.

Additionally, many independent pharmacies serve long-term care facilities and offer services such as compliance packaging for the residents. Even though TRICARE does not have a long-term care pharmacy benefit, TRICARE beneficiaries in facilities served by an independent pharmacy receive this level of care. Under the Cigna/Express Scripts changes, residents in these facilities will now be left to fend for themselves. As an example, a caregiver for his bedridden mother in a skilled nursing facility received a message from Cigna/Express Scripts that their independent pharmacy would no longer be in network. The options given for his mother to continue receiving her medications were to drive herself to the nearest Walgreens or military treatment facility and manage her medications on her own.

Additionally, Cigna/Express Scripts has not addressed concerns regarding access challenges associated with specialized sterile IV medications that require close coordination with nurses to administer safely. TRICARE beneficiaries relying on these medications require special pumps and supplies that Cigna/Express Scripts says will be provided by Accredo. Patients have reported missing doses, as well as being denied the sterile supplies needed to administer their medications when they attempted to use Accredo.

Furthermore, we have heard from many hospitals that they have been hesitant to discharge patients due to concerns of patients being able to access highly complex, specialty medications. Under the new TRICARE contract, many of the hospitals' specialty pharmacies are no longer in network, or there is confusion about when Accredo will be able to fill specialty medications. This leaves many patients with the impossible decision of being stuck in a hospital for longer than desired, or with the possibility of being without medications that are needed to keep them alive.

Our organizations have been engaged with a number of members of Congress, who are demanding answers as to why Express Scripts is restricting access to services for TRICARE beneficiaries.

Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) has called Express Scripts' network changes "[unacceptable](#)" – especially in relation to the impact this network change will have on rural areas. Reps. Buddy Carter (Ga.) and Mike Rogers (Ala.) [expressed concerns](#) over the impact to the sickest TRICARE enrollees who are serviced by specialty pharmacy. More than 100 bipartisan members of Congress have come together questioning why Express Scripts has chosen to [strip access](#) away from TRICARE families. Rep. Mike Johnson (La.) has also highlighted [serious concerns](#) regarding access for areas surrounding the Barksdale Air Force Base and Fort Polk, Louisiana.

On behalf of pharmacies of varied practice settings and the communities they are dedicated to serving, we strongly urge you to not disrupt essential continuity of care and pharmacies of choice for hundreds of thousands of TRICARE beneficiaries by urgently taking the necessary steps to ensure that all pharmacies that were included in the 2022 TRICARE network remain in the 2023 network at the 2022 terms and conditions."

Sincerely,

Alliance for Pharmacy Compounding (APC)
American Pharmacists Association (APhA)
National Association of Specialty Pharmacy (NASP)
National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA)
National Home Infusion Association (NHIA)
Senior Care Pharmacy Coalition (SCPC)