

# BROKER Connection

*Special  
Edition*

November 2, 2014

## UnitedHealthcare to Cover Tobacco Cessation Drugs at No Cost-Share Jan. 1

The Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and the Treasury issued a series of [FAQs](#) on May 2 related to preventive care, and specifically tobacco cessation interventions, under the Affordable Care Act.

In response to the Department's FAQ, UnitedHealthcare is modifying its approach to tobacco cessation drugs for our customers that follow our preventive care services benefit and offer OptumRx carve-in pharmacy benefits. These updates will be effective Jan. 1, 2015, for our fully insured plans:

UnitedHealthcare will cover **bupropion (generic for Zyban®) and over-the-counter (OTC) nicotine replacement therapy** drugs, including nicotine patches, gum and lozenges, without cost-share when:

- The member is 18 years of age and older enrolled in a UnitedHealthcare medical and pharmacy plan with preventive coverage;
- Prescribed by a health care professional (even if OTC);
- Prior authorization is received confirming that the member is participating in tobacco cessation counseling; and
- Filled at a network pharmacy, unless the policy provides out-of-network coverage (note: out-of-network cost-share would apply to all out-of-network services).

Because UnitedHealthcare covers the generic formulation, bupropion sustained-release, brand **Zyban** will be excluded.

**Nicotrol® and Chantix®** are covered without cost share when the above criteria are met and after failure/contraindication to a course of OTC nicotine replacement therapy and a separate course of bupropion.

UnitedHealthcare will **continue covering tobacco cessation counseling** and interventions without cost-share as it does today under the medical benefit as required under the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendations and consistent with essential health benefit requirements.

Changes will be reflected in the Jan. 1, 2015, release of the [Preventive Care Services Coverage Determination Guideline](#) (CDG). Updates will also be made to our Preventive Care Medications list.

### Rationale for UnitedHealthcare's Approach

The Department FAQs offer an example of a tobacco cessation program that meets the guidelines under the Affordable Care Act. However, the health reform law allows plans to use reasonable medical management to retain the flexibility to control costs and promote efficient delivery of care.

Tiering, exclusions, ancillary charges, prior authorization, supply limits and step therapy are reasonable medical management techniques that may be used to determine coverage.

### Notification for Impacted Fully Insured Members Oct. 31

Because some of our members receive these drugs today without prior authorization, we are notifying them in advance that these drugs will now require prior authorization.

A letter will be mailed Oct. 31 to impacted members who filled a prescription for a tobacco cessation drug in the last 120 days. There are three versions of the member letter:

- A brand **Zyban** version notifying members who have recently filled a prescription for Zyban that it is no longer covered, but its generic equivalent, bupropion sustained-release, is covered without cost-share.
- A **general** version notifying those with tobacco cessation coverage as part of their current plan that prior authorization is required and that certain drugs are available without cost-share.
- A **Chantix** version notifying members currently taking Chantix that the drug will be available without cost-share Jan. 1, 2015, and they will receive three months without prior authorization from Jan. 1 to March 31, 2015, so their therapy is not interrupted.

Members with Essential Health Benefit plans using Chantix, and members with grandfathered plans that do not cover Preventive Care Medications will be suppressed from this mailing.

Health insurance companies are not required to notify members when benefit changes provide greater coverage than what is currently offered.

If you have questions, please contact your UnitedHealthcare representative.