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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

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January 23, 2012

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Ted Wymyslo, M.D. FAAFP
Director Department of Health
P.O. Box 15098
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Director Wymyslo:

On August 13, 2010, your state provided my office with data regarding the top ten prescribers of several pain management and mental health drugs in your state. These types of drugs have addictive properties, and the potential for fraud and abuse by prescribers and patients is extremely high. Mental health drugs continue to be prescribed at astounding rates and pain management clinics are turning into a hotbed for black market painkillers. When these drugs are prescribed to Medicaid patients, it is the American people who pay the price for over-prescription, abuse, and fraud.

After an extensive review of prescribing habits of the serial prescribers of pain and mental health drugs in Ohio, I have concerns about the oversight and enforcement of Medicaid abuse in your state. While I am sensitive to the concerns of misinterpretation of the data you provided, the numbers themselves are quite shocking.

For example in 2009, the top prescriber of Abilify wrote 13,825 scripts—that is nearly 54 prescriptions per weekday. Likewise, the top prescriber of Seroquel wrote 18,890 scripts—which is nearly 73 prescriptions per weekday or 9 prescriptions per hour.

It is my intention to ensure that each of the states is adequately monitoring, investigating, and stopping fraud and over-prescription of these types of drugs. Therefore, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. What action, if any, has your agency taken with respect to the prescribers identified to the Committee?
2. If there has been no action taken with respect to these prescribers, please explain why not.
3. Please identify which of the providers identified to the Committee remain eligible to bill the Medicaid Program.
4. Please provide the 2010 and 2011 numbers for the top prescribers of these same drugs.
5. Has each of these prescribers been cross-checked for complaints or misconduct with the state medical board or the National Practitioner Data Bank? If not, do you plan to do so?
6. Have any of the prescribers identified to this Committee been referred to your state medical board?
7. Is there any system set up in your state to identify and monitor excessive prescription writing? If not, why not?
8. Have you received any training or guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Studies to help identify potential issues with prescription drugs?
9. Does your state maintain a database of all prescribed controlled-substances? If so, what entities have access to it?
10. Does your state have any point-of-sale restrictions related to maximum units, prior authorization, therapeutic duplication, or early refill? If not, why not?
11. Were any of these top ten prescribers identified in the federal-mandated Drug Utilization Review or CMS-base retrospective reviews?
12. Does your state have any programs in place to educate providers about the prescription of antipsychotics to children and adolescents?

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and attention in this matter. When responding to this letter, please number your answers in accordance with my questions. I would appreciate a response by February 13, 2012. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Erika Smith of my staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary