

# ***SEAFARERS HEALTH AND BENEFITS PLAN***

5201 Auth Way  
Camp Springs, Maryland 20746-4275  
(301) 899-0675

Margaret R. Bowen  
Administrator

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Dear Plan Participant:

Next year, the Seafarers Health and Benefits Plan (SHBP) will be implementing some new procedures with regard to your prescription benefits. SHBP is adopting these procedures in conjunction with OptumRx, our Pharmacy Benefits Manager, in order to ensure that medications are safely and properly prescribed to all Plan participants. This letter explains these policies and how they may apply to your future prescriptions if you are eligible for benefits from SHBP in the coming year.

## **Prior Authorization**

Beginning January 1, 2016, certain medications will require prior authorization from OptumRx. This means that before SHBP will pay for certain prescriptions, your doctor must show that you have a medical necessity for that particular drug. These medications require prior approval because they are drugs that:

- have only been approved or found effective for treating certain conditions but are being prescribed for a different condition; or
- are prescribed for conditions for which their safety and effectiveness have not been proven; or
- cost more than other medications that are used to treat the same or similar conditions.

If you are already receiving a prescription drug that requires prior authorization, OptumRx will notify you by mail before the end of this year. **The Plan will continue to pay for that prescription for up to one year without prior authorization**, in order to allow you sufficient time to obtain pre-authorization and/or to discuss alternative drugs with your doctor. If your doctor is prescribing a medication for the first time, it is a good idea for him or her to check the list of drugs that require prior authorization. SHBP will post this list on its website, and the information will also be available from OptumRx. The prior authorization form is available on the OptumRx website, [www.optumrx.com](http://www.optumrx.com). If you do not have access to a computer, you may call SHBP or OptumRx to request a paper copy.

### **Exclusion for Compound Drugs**

A compound drug is a customized medicine that is made to order by a pharmacist or doctor, or someone under their supervision, by combining, mixing, or altering ingredients of a drug to create a medication tailored to the needs of an individual patient. Compounded drugs are not approved by the FDA, therefore their safety, quality and effectiveness have not always been established. In most cases there are safe, effective, and lower-cost alternatives to compounded medications. For this reason, SHBP has decided that effective January 1, 2016, it will not pay for compounded drugs, unless your doctor provides a reason why there is not a suitable alternative. Your doctor may provide this information either by calling OptumRx at the phone number on the back of your ID card, faxing them a prior authorization form, or submitting the information to their online provider portal at [www.optumrx.com](http://www.optumrx.com)

### **Quantity Limits**

A quantity limit is the largest amount of a medication that you can receive per copayment, or in a certain time period. SHBP is implementing quantity limits on certain medications, to help to ensure that patients take the appropriate dosage of these drugs. These limits are based upon FDA recommendations for medication dosage, clinical guidelines or usage patterns. However, if you need a larger quantity of medication because you will be on a vessel for an extended period, SHBP will be able to approve your request to exceed the quantity limit.

### **Other Policies**

The pharmaceutical industry is constantly introducing new, high cost drugs. In many cases, there already is an existing medication that successfully treats the same condition. The SHBP will not pay benefits for a new drug for up to six months, until its effectiveness has been established by OptumRx. After the drug is approved, OptumRx will decide whether it will be paid for as a formulary or non-formulary drug (non-formulary drugs have a higher co-payment).

Just as a reminder, a **formulary** is a list of prescriptions, developed by doctors and pharmacists at OptumRx, based upon the drugs' safety, effectiveness and value. A copy of the formulary for SHBP is available at [www.optumrx.com](http://www.optumrx.com); or you may call SHBP or OptumRx to request a paper copy.

If you have any questions about any of these policies, please contact the Plan at: 1-800-252-4674.

Sincerely,

Margaret R. Bowen  
Administrator