

PAYING FOR YOUR DRUGS

Are you getting what you're entitled to?

Ontario still has not introduced the long-promised catastrophic drug programme to pay for the expensive medications many of us must use to keep alive. The basic anti-virals, AZT, DDC, DDI and pentamidine are made available for free through a special programme. Other medications are only covered if you qualify for an Ontario Drug Benefits (ODB) card. Usually you only qualify for an ODB card if you are on welfare or receiving homecare.

Even if you do qualify for ODB, the system can be complicated. There are three ways you can get your drug costs covered under the present system if you are on ODB.

Formulary list

This is a list of drugs which are paid for if you have an ODB card. You must show your card to the pharmacist when ordering your medication. The list includes common drugs like Septra/bactrim, dapsona, ethambutol, ciprofloxacin, amphotericin B etc. The problem is that many of the drugs we need for AIDS are still not on this list.

Non-formulary list

These drugs are not on the formulary list but can still be covered if a specially registered doctor prescribes them. Many pharmacists are unaware of this list so you may have to insist. Some common drugs on this list include rifabutin, fluconazole, ganciclovir and acyclovir.

Section 8 requests

This is a procedure where a doctor applies for coverage for a particular drug not on either of these lists, for an individual patient. This can be a long cumbersome process. Presently you need to make a Section 8 request to get clarithromycin for MAC, Mepron for PCP, Itraconazole for histoplasmosis or candidiasis, or somastatin for diarrhea, among others.

Meanwhile...

If you don't qualify for a drug card and you don't have 100% private insurance you're out of luck.

AIDS ACTION NOW! has been calling for a comprehensive programme to cut this red tape and to cover all of us who need drugs to fight our illnesses.

Make sure the system is giving you proper coverage now. Phone your MPP to explain why we need a catastrophic drug programme. Demand to know what she or he is going to do about it.

SILENCE = DEATH AIDS ACTION NOW!