

SoCO Network Provider Communication re: Therapeutic Substitutions

Starting in August 2022, Kaiser Permanente Pharmacies will be improving the care of members who present with a prescription for a non-formulary medication. The change will allow the member to fill a formulary medication at the time of presentation and alleviate the need for the prescriber to request a medical necessity exception.

When a Kaiser Permanente (KP) member presents with a prescription for a non-formulary medication at a KP pharmacy, the pharmacist will offer the patient a formulary medication in the same category and class. If the patient accepts the alternative, the pharmacist will fill the medication and send a notification to the prescriber.

This new process is allowed under recent revisions to the Colorado Pharmacy Practice Act, CRS 12-280-125(1)(a.5), that allows pharmacists to independently make therapeutic substitutions under certain circumstances.

In accordance with the above statute, therapeutic substitutions will only be made by the dispensing pharmacist if the patient agrees to the substitution and the substitution is being made to replace a drug on back order, ensure formulary compliance, or, if the patient is uninsured, to lower the cost to the patient while maintaining safety.

Additionally, therapeutic substitutions **will not** be made by the dispensing pharmacist for the following products:

- Drugs with a narrow therapeutic index
- Biological products
- Psychotropic drugs
- Prescriptions in which the prescriber has indicated that substitution is not allowed

Any time a therapeutic substitution is made by a dispensing pharmacist, the pharmacist will indicate that the substitution occurred on the prescription hardcopy and the prescriber will be notified by fax of the medication change. Prescriber approval prior to the substitution will not be required.

Kaiser Permanente will begin a pilot with a few targeted medication classes in our Southern Colorado pharmacies (Acero, Briargate, Parkside, Pueblo and Premier) in August.