

 Listen Live

ON AIR NOW

WUSF News | About Us | **GIVE NOW**



Health News Florida

Journalism for a Healthy State from WUSF

Home | Latest News | HNF Stories | Consumer | Opinion



Ongoing Coverage: [Board of Medicine »](#) [Understanding Obamacare »](#) [Florida Legislature »](#) [Affordable Care Act »](#) [Florida Blue »](#)

HNF Stories

11:02 AM TUE JUNE 10, 2014

Medicaid Plans to Get Extra Drug \$

 Share  Tweet  E-mail  Print

By [CAROL GENTRY](#)

Florida Medicaid officials have decided to give an extra payment to managed-care plans to cover the unexpected cost of a new treatment for a common viral illness, Hepatitis C.

The Agency for Health Care Administration intends to make a "kick payment" to plans to help them cover the drug Sovaldi, Press Secretary Shelisha Coleman said. That's the term used when an agency gives additional payments beyond the contracted amount because of unforeseen circumstances.



Credit Courtesy of Gilead Sciences Inc.

Coleman said details on the payments, including the amount, should be ready by June 30. AHCA officials say they don't think they will have to submit a supplementary request to the Legislative Budget Commission.

The kick-payment news will be a relief to the HMOs and PSN's (provider-service networks, which are mostly non-profit plans operated by hospitals, physician groups or clinics) staggering under the price of Sovaldi. Gilead, the manufacturer, is charging \$84,000 for one 12-week course of treatment; the drugs that must be given with it brings the cost to about \$90,000.

"When we got our rates they did not contemplate the inclusion of Sovaldi because it hadn't yet been approved," Dr. Mario Molina, CEO of Molina Health Plans, told Health News Florida last week.

Connect with Us



Find us on Facebook



Follow us on Twitter



Sign up for free
eAlerts >>

Most Active Stories

- State Asks to Liquidate Physicians United
- Judge OKs Physicians United Liquidation
- DCF Hid Reports on 30 Dead Kids
- Rebel Urologist Called 'Menace'
- Patients Gouged on Copies of Medical Records: Lawsuit

Health News Florida team



Carol Gentry
Health News Florida Editor

He said that if all Floridians who have hepatitis C infection were to be treated with the drug, it would cost billions of dollars. He estimated that 60 percent of those who are infected nationwide are enrolled in Medicaid.

Coleman said about 20,600 Florida Medicaid patients were diagnosed with Hepatitis C last year. Most are not so seriously ill that they would meet the criteria AHCA set up for treatment with one of the new treatments, Sovaldi and Olysio.

"Only about 16 percent of people who are infected with Hepatitis C will go on to develop full-blown cirrhosis," Molina said. But the problem, he said, is "we don't have a good way of predicting who needs to be treated."

Virtually all Medicaid patients who are diagnosed with Hepatitis C will be enrolled in managed-care plans by August, since Florida now requires them to. The plans have already signed contracts with AHCA that tell them how much money they have available, although there are some built-in protections to help with catastrophic cases.

AHCA, with help from an advisory committee of physicians and pharmacists, has set up criteria that plans should use for approval of **Sovaldi** and **Olysio** to limit the drugs' use to severe cases.

The medical criteria include: stage 3 or 4 disease (with 4 being the highest); a particular genotype for the virus, since not all respond to the medication; and a minimum viral load.

In addition, the patient must be free of drugs and alcohol for at least a month, as demonstrated by urine or blood tests, or must be receiving counseling for substance or alcohol abuse at the time of the hepatitis treatment.

Hepatitis C is transmitted by body fluids. Some of those who are infected were drug abusers who shared needles, although some got the virus from blood transfusions decades ago or were infected at birth.

Presumably the requirement for drug-free behavior was inspired by a concern -- expressed by advisory committee members -- that patients might be given the expensive drugs and be cured of disease, only to resume drug use and get it again.

Use of alcohol is presumably listed because it causes further damage to a liver that is already ravaged by the virus.

TAGS: [Florida Medicaid](#) [Sovaldi](#) [Olysio](#) [Hepatitis C](#) [Molina Health Plans](#) [Agency for Health Care Administration](#) [AHCA](#)

Related Content:



HNF Stories
[FL Medicaid Limits Hep C Drug](#)

Health News Florida

[Medicaid Patients Forced to Move](#)



Health News Florida
[Bumpy Start to Medicaid Managed Care](#)



Mary Shedden
Health News Florida Reporter



Lottie Watts
Health News Florida Producer/Reporter



Robin Shwedo
Health News Florida Intern



Megan Milanese
Health News Florida Intern



Morgan Alexander
Health News Florida Intern



May Zayan
Health News Florida Intern