

For Immediate Release

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Runaway Specialty Rx Spending Continues in 2015

A Prescription for Higher Health Care Costs

The Conference of Blue Cross and Blue Shields Plans (NYSCOP) today released a 2015 update to the infographic titled, "[Runaway Specialty Rx Spending](#)," detailing how "specialty" drugs are driving up the cost of prescription medications and ultimately increasing the cost of health care.

Last year, NYSCOP warned of this alarming trend and its impact on health care premiums. This trend continues in 2015, and is expected into the foreseeable future.

"Prescription drugs play a critical role in helping to prevent, manage and cure disease," said Deborah Fasser, spokeswoman for NYSCOP. "Yet the costs of many of these emerging therapies and specialty drugs, which are used to treat complex, chronic and often costly conditions such as multiple sclerosis and cancer, are rising at an alarming rate."

According to the NYSCOP infographic, in 2012 specialty drugs accounted for approximately \$87 billion, 25 percent of total drug spending. In 2014, costs had ballooned to 33 percent to \$126.3 billion, and by 2020, estimates suggest spending on specialty drugs could quadruple, reaching about \$400 billion.

"Specialty drugs, including biologic treatments ranging from treatments for rheumatoid arthritis to HIV, hold tremendous promise and have the capacity to help millions suffering from chronic diseases," said Fasser. "Consumers must be aware, however, of the costs associated with these medications and their impact on health care costs."

Nationally, for every insured person \$311 of your annual health insurance premium is applied toward paying for the top ten common classes of specialty drugs, such as those used to treat diabetes or hypertension, irrespective of the person's health or need – an increase of nearly 30 percent in just one year. For a family of four, this means approximately \$1,244 of their annual premium goes toward paying for these drugs, despite the fact that no one in the family may need or utilizes these therapies.

For more information, please visit NYSCOP at: www.nysblues.org.

The New York State Conference of Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans (NYSCOP) is a partnership of Rochester-based Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield and New York City-based Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield. Together, the two health insurance plans provide comprehensive health coverage for millions of New Yorkers and are dedicated to educating the public through in-depth research and analysis of the cost, access and quality of health care.

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