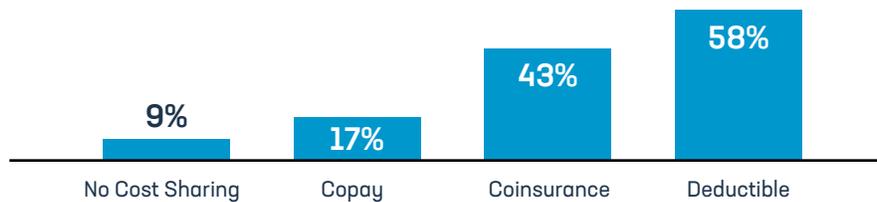


Insurers Shift Medicine Costs to Patients with Chronic Illnesses Like Asthma and COPD

For services like hospital stays and doctor visits, health plans routinely share the negotiated prices they receive with patients. When it comes to life saving medicines, that's often not the case. Middlemen such as insurers and pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) often shift medicine costs to patients for their brand respiratory medicine.

Rate of Abandonment for Commercially Insured Patients Taking Newly Prescribed Brand Medicines by Type of Cost Sharing, 2021



"I just don't understand why my health insurance gets more expensive year over year but covers less and less of the cost of my inhaler."

-**Thomas Homan**, Patient with Asthma, Florida

These middlemen force people with deductibles and coinsurance to pay cost sharing based on the full list price for brand respiratory medicines, not the lower, negotiated price they pay. Manufacturer copay assistance plays an important role in helping ensure patients with respiratory conditions can access the medicines they need.

Patients with deductibles and coinsurance taking brand respiratory medicines paid

4.1x more

out of pocket, on average, in 2021 compared to patients with fixed copays.

People who used copay assistance for brand respiratory medicines saved an average of \$473 in 2021. Without this assistance, their average out-of-pocket costs would have been more than **3x higher**.

Total cost sharing set by health plan

\$682

Final annual out-of-pocket spending

\$209

\$473

— Savings from use of patient assistance

Middlemen should base what patients pay on the lower price health plans and PBMs pay. And patients need policies that protect copay assistance so that health insurers and PBMs are no longer able to limit how much assistance can help patients at the pharmacy counter.

When you're sick, you should be battling your illness—not battling middlemen. Learn more at PhRMA.org/Middlemen.

Source:

PhRMA. "Faced with High Cost Sharing for Brand Medicines, Many Commercially Insured Patients with Chronic Conditions Use Manufacturer Copay Assistance," February 2023.

For more on this analysis, see the **full report**.