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Drug plan trends in Canada

From Benefits Canada (December 2, 2005)

Christine Than, director of Health Management Services at Emergis in Montreal, looked at what is driving the costs of employer-sponsored drug plans and gave a snapshot of new drugs that are in the pipeline.

Than explained how an aging population is a major cost driver for prescription drug plans in Canada. "As the population ages, the [prescription] utilization increases," Than said. "The population is getting older and you have seen over the last five years a couple of new drugs that have revolutionized the treatment of certain diseases, but have also increased costs for plan sponsors significantly."

New drugs on the Canadian horizon include:

Symlin: An injectable solution for subcutaneous injection in combination with insulin for type one and type two diabetic patients. The cost of this drug is \$100 to \$200/mth.

Byetta: Pre-filled pens for subcutaneous injection to help control glucose levels in type two diabetic patients if unresponsive to first line therapy. The cost of this drug is \$147 to \$175/mth.

Revatio: This drug is not yet available. It has the same molecule as Viagra and will be used to decrease blood pressure in the lung for patients diagnosed with pulmonary arterial hypertension to increase exercise ability.

Exjade: Is available in pill form to treat chronic iron overload at \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year. Previous treatments was administered by infusion in hospital setting.