



News from:

COMPTROLLER KEVIN LEMBO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2017

Contact: Tara Downes
860-702-3308
Tara.Downes@ct.gov

LEMBO ANNOUNCES MEASURE TO BLOCK UNNECESSARY COSTLY DRUGS AND INVESTIGATE ALLEGED RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DRUG MAKERS AND PHARMACIES

Comptroller Kevin Lembo today announced that his office, in partnership with the state's Health Care Cost Containment Committee (HCCCC), has initiated a measure to block the unnecessary use of outrageously expensive specialty drugs – and is urging the Office of the Attorney General to investigate the alleged possible relationships between a drug manufacturer and its top dispensing pharmacies and prescribers.

Lembo said that an initial review has confirmed that the vast majority of prescriptions dispensed by two Connecticut pharmacies through the state health plan are for drugs manufactured by just one single drug manufacturer, Horizon Pharma.

Horizon specializes in expensive drugs – costing more than \$1,000 per prescription, in some cases – even though these medications are essentially just combinations of affordable over-the-counter drugs like ibuprofen and Pepsid AC or Aleve and Nexium.

According to published reports, the U.S. Department of Justice is also investigating Horizon and its alleged relationships with specialty pharmacies. Lembo said prescribing practices in Connecticut raise similar questions about Horizon's alleged relationships with prescribers.

“This review is necessary to ensure that prescriptions are motivated by what's best for the health of patients – and not motivated by financial interests of drug corporations,” Lembo said. “As administrator of the state plan, we need to better understand the reasons and possible incentives driving these pharmacy trends.”

In addition to the top pharmacies dispensing these drugs, Lembo urged further investigation into the top medical providers prescribing Horizon drugs for the state employee plan. Lembo said that, according to state claims data, one prescriber alone accounted for \$1.5 million in prescriptions for Horizon products (11.6 percent of total amount of Horizon products prescribed through the state plan).

“My office will continue to work in partnership with other state officials to block unnecessary costs to the state plan and investigate troubling pharmaceutical trends,” Lembo said.

This latest case follows earlier efforts by Lembo and HCCCC to stop questionable prescribing practices involving compound pharmacies. More than two years ago Lembo acted to block and investigate the use of high-cost compound drugs – a measure that saved the state approximately \$2.24 million per month. Lembo also referred those practices to the Office of the Attorney General and it ultimately resulted in an investigation and legal action.

In this latest case, Lembo said that for at least two Connecticut pharmacies 70 percent of prescriptions that they filled for the state plan were for Horizon Pharma products alone.

Lembo said that these practices raise questions about what possible incentives are motivating such a high concentration of prescriptions for Horizon’s products.

*****END*****