

POLICY REVIEW

Action on diabetes, hypertension drugs

Medicines received from outpatient departments to be covered by basic medical insurance scheme

By XU WEI
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The State Council has decided to expand the medical insurance scheme's coverage to include outpatient medicines for treating high blood pressure and diabetes in an effort to reduce the burden on patients.

In a statement released after an executive meeting on Wednesday, the Cabinet said patients with hypertension and diabetes will be reimbursed for more than half of the

cost of medicines they receive from hospital outpatient departments, as long as the medicines are included in the national basic medical insurance catalog.

The new policy will benefit more than 300 million patients with the diseases who are covered by the basic medical insurance scheme in rural and urban areas, the statement said.

Premier Li Keqiang said at the meeting that the decision will not only help ensure the health of the general public, but also improve the quality of the labor force.

"It is also closely related to the future of the nation, and we must make it a priority," he said.

“For patients with both diseases, failure to bring their conditions under control will result in serious complications.”

Li Ling, Peking University professor

Li noted that a large number of poor families are troubled by hypertension and diabetes, and the cost of treatment is so high that the living standard of some families has fallen below the poverty line.

He called on the authorities to take concrete measures to lower drug prices and reduce the burden on patients.

The premier also underscored the importance of disease prevention, saying that early diagnosis and treatment will help reduce the incidence of both diseases and ensure the sustainability of medical insurance funds.

To facilitate lower drug prices, the Cabinet said the pooled procurement of drugs will be moved forward and the number of drugs procured will be expanded.

A long-term prescription mechanism will be established to further reduce the burden on patients.

Li Ling, a Peking University professor who has conducted research on the country's medical reforms, said the steps rolled out by the Cabinet will bring about major benefits to patients.

"For patients with both diseases, failure to bring their conditions under control will result in serious complications, which not only bring about skyrocketing medical costs but also

severe damage to health," she said.

She said the latest measures will not increase the pressure on the medical insurance scheme as the pooled procurement of drugs will help reduce drug prices.

However, she said, the key to controlling the two diseases lay in promoting healthier lifestyles among the general public.

According to the World Health Organization, close to 10 percent of all adults in China — about 110 million people — have diabetes.

Without urgent action to reduce lifestyle risk factors like unhealthy diets and a lack of physical activity, that number is expected to increase to 150 million by 2040 with major health, social and economic consequences.

The WHO noted that almost half of all adults in China — close to 500 million people — have prediabetes. "Not only does this pose a risk factor for developing diabetes, but also for other conditions such as cardiovascular disease," it said.

As for hypertension, the WHO said the number of patients in China had reached 270 million.

Only 13.8 percent had their condition under control and some people with hypertension could not access treatment.

Noncommunicable diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer, are China's No. 1 health threat, contributing to 88 percent of the country's 10.3 million deaths each year and nearly 70 percent of its total disease burden, according to the National Health Commission.

Lei Zhenglong, deputy head of the commission's disease control bureau, told a news briefing in July that promoting healthy lifestyles was crucial for preventing diabetes and hypertension.

"Obesity, caused by unhealthy eating habits and a lack of physical activity, is the major risk factor leading to hypertension and diabetes," he said.

Lei said the authorities will prioritize efforts to standardize health management among patients so they can control their diseases and prevent complications.

Policy digest

More resources devoted to compliance oversight

The State Council has called for greater efforts to boost compliance oversight and develop a business environment in line with market principles, international standards and the rule of law.

The Cabinet said in a guideline published on Thursday that the government will shift more administrative resources from approvals to compliance oversight, with steps to refine and innovate the rules and procedures for government supervision.

It underscored the importance of equal treatment for various types of market entities, saying that mechanisms and systems that impede fair competition must be abolished and the legitimate rights of all types of market entities must be protected.

The disclosure of government oversight rules, standards, procedures and results must be further pushed forward so that government law enforcement can be more transparent, the guideline said.

It also highlighted the need to employ modern technology, such as the internet, big data, internet of things, cloud computing and artificial intelligence, to optimize oversight and minimize disturbance to market entities.

Government departments will be required to draft oversight rules and standards for different sectors that can be easily applied nationwide before making them public.

It also called on the authorities to accelerate the refining of standards for different areas and clearly state the standards that management, technologies, safety and production must comply with.

For areas directly related to public safety and health, the guideline said the authorities must prioritize their oversight efforts and step up quality management from production through to sales and final use.

The State Council also highlighted the need for the authorities to continue with prudent and accommodating regulation for new business models, technologies and industries to ensure they have adequate room for growth.

To ensure that those who violate the law pay a high price for their wrongdoing, the government will refine the mechanism governing punitive compensation, large fines and lifelong bans on market access.

A whistle-blowing mechanism that encourages reporting on violations will also be established, the guideline said.

Measures target jobs and commodity prices

The State Council said on Wednesday that it will expand measures to shore up employment and stabilize commodity prices.

It said in a statement released after an executive meeting that ensuring the basic public livelihood must be the priority under the current circumstances.

The government will continue to focus on the job market and bolster services to college graduates who are yet to find jobs. More channels will be created for migrant workers and those undertaking flexible jobs to increase their income, the statement said.

It called for quicker implementation of measures to stabilize pork prices, including canceling unreasonable restrictions on the building of pig farms. The market supply of meat, eggs, vegetables and natural gas must be guaranteed.

The Cabinet also called for full issuance of pensions and for social security mechanisms to provide temporary aid to those in need.

The fostering of new economic growth engines must focus on public demand, and the supply of high-quality services including education, healthcare, aged care and day care for infants will be increased.

The renovation of old residential buildings will be accelerated, with residents' wishes taken fully into account during the process, the statement said.

XU WEI



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

POLICY RESPONSE

Use of concentrated laundry detergents promoted

By XU WEI

Several ministry-level departments, including those responsible for industry and information technology, public security, and market regulation, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

Green laundry 'more effective', less wasteful

China will promote the use of concentrated laundry detergents to encourage green consumption among the general public, an official said on Sept 10.

Xin Guobin, vice-minister of industry and information technology, said during a meeting in Beijing that the promotion of concentrated detergents will make laundry more effective by reducing the usage of ineffective chemicals and water.

China has set a target of increas-

ing the use of concentrated detergents to 20 percent of all laundry detergents next year, up from less than 5 percent at present.

Wang Minyan, president of the China Cleaning Industry Association, said the association will encourage the certification of concentrated detergent products and urge consumers to choose the right products for a low-carbon lifestyle.

Vehicle retailers to offer registration services

The Ministry of Public Security said on Sept 10 that it will allow motor vehicle retailers to provide license plate number selection and car registration services.

The measure will be piloted from Friday in a number of big and medium-sized cities including Beijing, Shanghai and provincial capitals before being extended across the country by the end of this year, ministry official Li Jiangping told a news conference.

Part of a reform to facilitate easier vehicle registration, it will enable car buyers to choose license plate numbers and receive their vehicle licenses directly after purchase.

Chinese motorists have previous-



ly had to register their newly purchased cars at a vehicle administration office to obtain a vehicle license.

Campaign launched to boost food safety

China will launch a campaign targeting illegal food producers and misconduct during food production and marketing, an official statement released on Wednesday said.

The campaign, jointly launched by the State Administration for Market Regulation and three other departments, will also target wrongdoing such as false publicity claims and illegal sales in the health food sector.

The rectification of food safety problems in schools and kindergartens will also be prioritized, the statement said.

Ensuring the safety and quality of

agricultural products will also be a priority, with efforts focusing on the safety of vegetables, eggs, pork and aquatic products, it added. The use of banned pesticides and veterinary drugs will also be targeted.

Xiao Yaqing, the minister of market regulation, said the campaign will be completed before the end of November.

He urged the authorities to accept public supervision, enable better public participation and step up services to the public.

Checkups can reduce incidence of birth defects

On China's Birth Defect Prevention Day, Sept 12, an official with the National Health Commission called on couples of childbearing age to undergo necessary checks and screenings to prevent birth defects.

Qin Geng, head of the commission's department of maternal and infant health, said couples of childbearing age must go through premarital and pre-pregnancy checks, prenatal screening and diagnosis and newborn disease screening.

He was speaking at an event aimed at raising awareness about birth defects prevention and treatment held by the NHC and the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation of China.

Qin highlighted the importance of promoting health knowledge and improving public health expertise to prevent birth defects, saying that children under the age of 6 must receive regular health services.

Expectant mothers must avoid harmful chemicals such as lead, mercury, benzene and formaldehyde, and stay away from radiation, he said.

The foundation has established and promoted a birth defects intervention and treatment service system that involves 594 institutions and bases.

Data from the China Disabled Persons' Federation suggests that about 900,000 babies are born with birth defects every year.

