



**PATIENTS FIRST
WISCONSIN**



Contact: Kelly Lietz
Vice President, Communications
Wisconsin Hospital Association
klietz@wha.org | 608.268.1845

WISCONSIN HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS APPLAUD BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO PROHIBIT WHITE BAGGING

Patients First Wisconsin supports Koreen’s Law to prevent insurance companies from implementing payer-mandated white bagging, a policy that risks medication safety and removes patient choice

Madison, Wis., Oct. 21, 2021—A coalition of state and national health care organizations has launched a public awareness campaign aimed at putting a stop to a health insurer practice known as “white bagging.” A bipartisan group of ten Wisconsin lawmakers introduced **Koreen’s Law**, named for an Eau Claire cancer patient whose health insurer’s specialty drug policy needlessly threatened the quality and reliability of the life-saving medication she desperately needed.

White bagging is a new tactic by health insurers that requires certain medications to be purchased through specialty pharmacies often owned by the insurance company, instead of the patient’s preferred local health care provider. This practice disrupts care for patients with multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and several other conditions by making these drugs out-of-network if dispensed by a pharmacy at a local health care provider and requiring patients to use a distant insurer-mandated pharmacy.

White bagging creates risks for patients like Koreen Holmes by sourcing drugs outside the normal supply chain and quality control process and create delays in medication administration that significantly affect patient health. In a recent survey by health care consulting firm Vizient, Inc., 83% of hospitals said that specialty medications delivered to them for patient administration through white bagging did not arrive on time, and another 66% of hospitals said that they have received the wrong dose.

“When a process unilaterally mandated by an insurance company fails, hospitals and their care teams are left to put the pieces back together on behalf of patients,” said Wisconsin Hospital Association President and CEO Eric Borgerding. “Koreen’s story is an unfortunate, but perfect, example of the commitment Wisconsin hospitals make to care for patients, even when it is made more difficult by the patient’s insurance company.”

“Pharmacists are critical providers on an integrated patient care team. Pharmacists help to develop treatment plans and safely manage life-changing medications for patients,” said Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin Executive Vice President and CEO Sarah Sorum. “Payer-mandated white bagging is a risk-prone process that introduces waste and delays into a pharmacist’s supply chain, adding layers of patient care complications.”

MORE

Children’s Wisconsin Chief Quality Officer Chris Spahr, MD, is concerned about how the growing trend of white bagging is disrupting the medication safety systems and the lives of the kids and families his hospital serves. “The focus on safety and safe system design in health care over the last two decades has improved care and outcomes tremendously for our patients, especially in the ordering, preparation and administration of medications,” he said. “The white bagging process that insurance companies are requiring patients to utilize to receive important medications circumvents the medication safety mechanisms that health systems have developed, leading to delays in care, waste, and poor outcomes.”

Reedsburg Area Medical Center Director of Pharmacy Hannel Ambord has worked directly with several patients in rural Wisconsin who are upset and frustrated about white bagging. “This practice puts an insurance company’s choice over patient choice,” she said. “With white bagging, insurance companies are making decisions that belong to providers and their patients, and hospitals like ours are left to deal with the fallout. We need swift assistance from our state’s elected officials to help us put an end to white bagging, which has too often shown to delay much needed care. Our patients’ health and well-being must come first.”

To stop white bagging in Wisconsin, a bipartisan group of ten Wisconsin lawmakers led by Sen. Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) and Rep. Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) introduced a bill named **Koreen’s Law**, which would prohibit insurance companies from mandating the source of specialty medications outside of the normal supply chain for such drugs used by an in-network provider.

Learn more about white bagging, its effects on real Wisconsin patients and their families and what Patients First Wisconsin is doing to fight this disruptive and dangerous health insurance practice at PatientsFirstWI.com.

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ABOUT PATIENTS FIRST WISCONSIN

Patients First Wisconsin is a coalition-led initiative aimed at educating health care stakeholders, lawmakers and the general public about the threat to health care quality, safety and affordability posed by insurance companies requiring drugs to be purchased through their exclusive specialty pharmacies, a practice known as “white bagging.” Learn more about the detrimental effects of white bagging on patient care and hear from Wisconsin patients affected by the practice at PatientsFirstWI.com.

ABOUT KOREEN HOLMES

Eight months into her pregnancy, Koreen Holmes and her husband Nate were focusing on final doctor appointments and diapers. When Koreen was told she had breast cancer, their world turned from a vibrant color to black and white. “It was life or death,” said Koreen, who is just 32 years old. “Obviously, I chose life, which meant many months of cancer treatments and powerful medication.”

The expectant mom delivered her baby early – on Jan. 28, 2021, and treatments at the Prevea Cancer Center at HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire began six days later. She required infusion treatments every three weeks.

Despite the curveball thrown at the Holmes family, they remained positive, and Koreen’s life-saving medications were working.

Then came July 1.

“We found out our insurance wasn’t going to pay for the medication anymore because the company put a new policy in place that dictated where we had to get the medicine from – something called ‘white bagging,’” said Nate.

Read more of Koreen’s story [here](#).