



# Quest Physician Update

September 2010

Click here to register online for our free half-day medical conference on High Tech Imaging Use and Radiation Safety scheduled on Wednesday, Sept. 29, from 8 a.m. to noon, at the Par-A-Dice Hotel in East Peoria.



## Transforming Healthcare-Together.

Gail Amundson, MD, FACP  
CEO, Quality Quest for Health of Illinois

Dear Colleagues,

Sometimes it is worth taking a step back and sizing up a situation to determine if one's efforts are on target. Quest has taken a fresh look at our approach to making medications more affordable in Illinois, and we are more convinced than ever that prescribing generics first is critically important.

Quest's Quarterly Generic Prescribing results have improved steadily since the initial Q3 2007 65.1% generic prescribing rate. Q2 2010 generic prescribing is 77%. Central Illinois has a higher rate of generic prescribing than the state as a whole, partly due to Quality Quest Generic Prescribing Reports.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Illinois spends \$6.68 billion on prescription medications in total every year. A conservative rule of thumb is that one percent increase in generic prescribing lowers prescription drug costs by 2%. This means that Illinois saves more than \$72 million dollars every year for each one percent increase. A 9% change, like we have seen in central Illinois, would save Illinois roughly one billion dollars a year.

Without stepping back, it is difficult to appreciate the magnitude of impact physicians have on healthcare costs and the extent to which medication marketing has the ability to increase physician's use of brand-name drugs. Pharmaceutical company messaging about newly released medications can mislead physicians into making assumptions that are not substantiated by medical evidence. A current example is the new once-daily Alzheimer's medication Aricept 23 mg being promoted as more effective than Aricept 10, now available as generic Donepezil. What is not emphasized is that the study for Aricept 23 mg used in support of its FDA approval excluded all patients taking any one of a long list of sedating medications, many of which are commonly prescribed to patients with dementia. Without being aware of this, a physician could assume Aricept 23 has been proven safe and effective for concurrent use with any of these other medications, when in fact it has never even been studied.

Stepping back one sees how many physicians, making small changes in their prescribing patterns, can add up to very big savings for the people of Illinois. Generics work. They are safe and affordable. A few new options are:

<b>Brand</b>	<b>Generic</b>
CARDIZEM LA	diltiazem sr 24 hr
COZAAR	losartan
FLOMAX	tamsulosin
HYZAAR	losartan & hydrochlorothiazide
SKELAXIN	metaxalone

Thank you for all you do to make patient care better and safer. Together, we are transforming healthcare.

Respectfully,

Gail M. Amundson, MD, FACP