

Psychotropic Drug Use in Children and Youth: Parents, Caregivers and Practitioners Must Understand Risks, Monitor Use

AVON, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Magellan Health Services (NASDAQ: MGLN), a leading specialty health care management company with expertise in managing behavioral health for approximately 34 million members — roughly 10% of the country's population — today said that the use of psychotropic drugs in children can be appropriate, but that parents, caregivers and practitioners must understand the risks, and monitor the use. Speaking to the anxiety and confusion that surrounds the prescription of these medications for children, Magellan released a clinical monograph on the subject, which also includes a first-in-industry summary of psychotropic drugs commonly prescribed for children, the FDA approval age, pediatric dosage level, and warnings and/or precautions, including "black box" warnings associated with their use. Only about 31 percent of psychotropic medications have been approved by the FDA for use in children or adolescents, and it is estimated that more than 75% of the prescriptions written for psychiatric illness in this population are "off label" — used for a purpose not listed on the label.

"This is a patient safety issue," said Gary Henschen, M.D., chief medical officer of Magellan Health Services Behavioral Health business unit. "The use of psychotropic drugs in children can be appropriate, but importantly, they must be used for therapeutic reasons and not simply for behavior control. The information in this clinical monograph clearly shows the risks and benefits of these medications that must be considered.

"Before medication is prescribed, a complete psychosocial evaluation must be performed to identify alternative therapies and approaches that may prove successful, and parents and caregivers need to ask questions to educate themselves about the medication and its side effects," said Henschen. "In addition, parents, caregivers and the child patient need to participate in all aspects of treatment decision-making, including the creation of a plan for use. For our part, we will continue to carefully monitor pharmacy claims data to help identify practitioners who prescribe outside best-practice norms, and provide consultation as to appropriate treatment options. Magellan is also committed to ensuring that parents, caregivers and the patient have the information necessary to make informed decisions."

Henschen continued, "The use of psychotropic drugs in children should be the beginning of the conversation, not the end, in terms of a full, broad, and wide-ranging treatment plan, particularly for those children in the Medicaid population who are more than twice as likely as their peers on private insurance to take an antipsychotic medication."

Pat Hunt, director of child and family resiliency services at Magellan Health Services, said that parents are often under pressure to make quick decisions about medication for their child.

"Some parents and caregivers seek medication as a result of demands from individuals who work in child-serving systems who are facing challenges in serving their child; some have tried other treatments and find themselves seeking medication as a last resort; and still others may be persuaded by their peers or advertising," said Hunt. "What they all share in common is their desire for a successful solution and a need to help their child. This resource can help familiarize parents, caregivers and practitioners alike with the risks associated with these prescription drugs, and help them ask questions, make informed choices and actively identify outcomes. Their role in monitoring medication and its effects is key to high quality clinical treatment."

"The use of psychiatric medications for children can be a useful tool in a multi-pronged treatment plan for children with emotional and behavioral health disorders. However, in many cases the use of psychiatric medications has outpaced the research that would support such use, particularly in young children," said Christopher Bellonci, M.D., an assistant professor at Tufts University School of Medicine. "As the scientific evidence base becomes more firmly established, resources like Magellan's clinical monograph are essential for parents, caregivers, and the youth themselves, as they try to navigate treatment recommendations."

Magellan has shared the monograph, "[Appropriate Use of Psychotropic Drugs in Children and Adolescents](#)," with the behavioral health practitioners in its network and is hosting a [webinar](#) to present the information to others in the industry.

About Magellan Health Services: Headquartered in Avon, Conn., Magellan Health Services Inc. is a leading specialty health care management organization with expertise in managing behavioral health, radiology, and pharmacy benefits programs, as well as integrated health care programs for special populations. Magellan delivers innovative solutions to improve quality outcomes and optimize the cost of care for those we serve. As of June 30, 2013, Magellan's customers include health plans, employers and government agencies, serving approximately 34.0 million members in our behavioral health business, 17.4 million members in our radiology benefits management segment, and approximately 9 million members in our medical pharmacy management product. In addition, the pharmacy solutions segment served 40 health

plans and employers, 25 states and the District of Columbia, and several pharmaceutical manufacturers. For more information, visit www.MagellanHealth.com.

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