

Opioid case management
program cuts opioid utilization
59%, reduces morphine
equivalent dose 75%



Driven by a desire to cut inappropriate opioid prescribing by providers and reduce opioid utilization among their workers' compensation claimants, Zurich North America launched an opioid case management (OCM) program over a decade ago. Then in 2018, Optum Workers' Comp and Auto No-fault joined with Zurich to allow for expansion of the program to reach more claimants.

"The program has delivered sustained decreases in claimant opioid utilization as reflected by decreased prescriptions and overall amount of opioids. This was accomplished by bringing together the right medical expertise with the prescribing physician and working toward the common goal of patient safety," said William Lindberg, RN, Director of Pharmacy Services, Zurich North America.

The successful intervention process involves a three-part approach implemented by Optum:

1. Clinical letters explaining the program to eligible claimants;
2. Treatment plans assessed by nurses; and
3. Outreach on qualified cases between peer providers (claimant provider and an Optum Board Certified Pain Management physician).

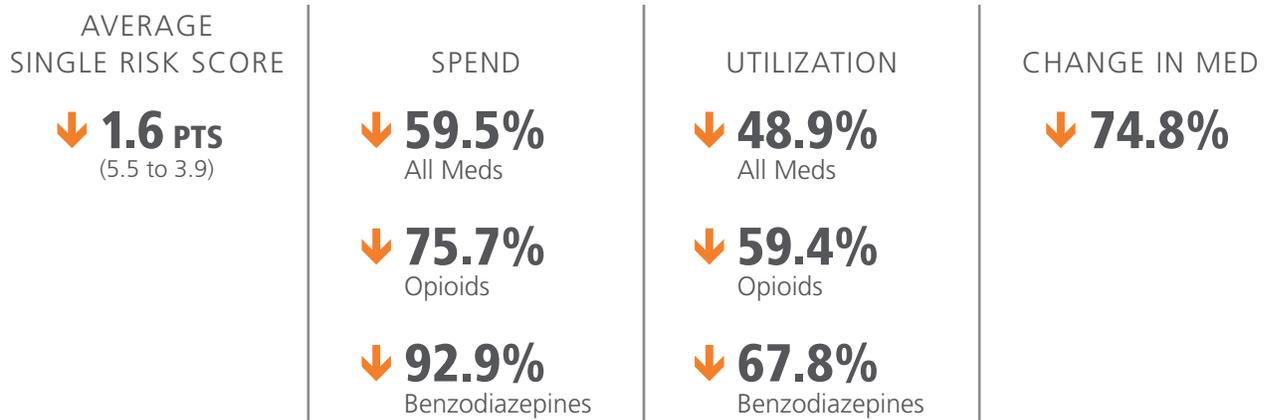
OCM program's evolution enables more eligible claimants – sparking more utilization decreases

Beginning in June 2018, the program focused on claimants who had a daily morphine equivalent dose (MED) of 100 or higher. Since then, the program has evolved and, over time, the OCM eligibility threshold for high opioid doses has been lowered to the evolving CDC guidelines. *"Working with Optum, the Zurich OCM program has the agility to address the patient safety challenges of opioid management while delivering optimal claim outcomes,"* said Dr. Nina McIlree, VP Medical Management, Zurich North America.

Overall medication use drops

The program drove significant cuts in utilization across the board – not just in opioids – but also benzodiazepines and other medications. Peer discussions directed at optimizing care, eliminating duplications and applying evidence-based medication strategies spurred the reductions.

Claimants enrolled in the program between June 2018 and June 2019 show notable results during year-long measurement period



Zurich asks Optum to prove OCM program results

With opioid prescribing and opioid utilization dropping industry-wide due to the Workers’ Compensation industry focus on the opioid epidemic, Zurich asked Optum to validate that the opioid utilization decreases could be attributed to the OCM program.

Since the OCM program could not be implemented in all states due to ex-parte rules, Optum created a “control group” of similar claimants who could not participate in OCM due to their state’s regulations. The control group had approximately the same monthly spend, claim age, number of medications and average MED. Optum tracked the unmanaged control group over time and a comparative analysis with the managed group proved the value of the OCM program.

“The claimants participating in the OCM program had much more dramatic decreases in opioids compared to the unmanaged control group and industry statistics. It’s our proof point showing that, yes, these interventions really do work,” said Kelly Kaufman, Optum Clinical Pharmacist Liaison.

A study over 24 months shows significant drops in opioid utilization, MED and spend in the managed versus unmanaged claimants

	Unmanaged Control Group		OCM Claimant Group	
	Spend percent change	Utilization percent change	Spend percent change	Utilization percent change
All medications	(33.1%)	(24.5%)	(59.5%)	(48.9%)
Opioids	(28.2%)	(28.3%)	(75.7%)	(59.4%)
Benzodiazepine	8.4%	(3.8%)	(92.9%)	(67.8%)
MED percent change	(28.7%)		(74.8%)	

Results for 20 enrolled claimants in OCM, 39 "control" claimants

OPIOID CASE MANAGEMENT RESULTS

OPIOID UTILIZATION REDUCTION

↓ 59%

31% greater decrease than the unmanaged group

MED REDUCTION

↓ 75%

46% greater decrease than the unmanaged group

Significant drop in benzodiazepines is OCM program bonus – combining with opioids is big safety issue

The CDC reports that 63% of opioid deaths occurring from January to June 2018 in 25 states also involved other medications, and 33% of these deaths also had concurrent benzodiazepine use.

Combining benzodiazepines with opioids is very dangerous and risks respiratory depression or risk of fatal overdose. As a result, the FDA modified the labeling and changed the Black Box warning indicating benzodiazepines should not be used in combination with opioids.

“Again, working with Optum, Zurich has been able to expand the scope of the OCM program to include dangerous combinations of medications such as benzodiazepines and sedatives,” Dr. McIlree said.

High OCM program participation amplifies outcomes

Together, Optum and Zurich have a very high success rate in enrolling claimants into the OCM program who meet the criteria. *“Zurich’s commitment is to reach every eligible claimant and bring their opioid-related safety needs to the attention of their physician,”* said Dr. Joseph Semkiu, Zurich North America Medical Director. *“The overall goal goes beyond opioids toward the claimant’s most efficient and effective injury recovery.”*

About Optum Workers’ Comp and Auto No-Fault Solutions

Optum Workers’ Comp and Auto No-Fault Solutions collaborates with clients to lower costs while improving health outcomes for the injured persons we serve. Our comprehensive pharmacy, ancillary, medical services, and settlement solutions, combine data, analytics, and extensive clinical expertise with innovative technology to ensure injured persons receive safe, appropriate and cost-effective care throughout the lifecycle of a claim. For more information, email us at expectmore@optum.com.

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