

OPINION

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Cuts in state agency will hurt disabled Floridians

Because of a lack of funds from the state budget, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities is cutting the Med Waiver/Med Review Program, which provides consultant pharmacist reviews for drug therapies of patients with disabilities.

I realize the financial restraints that the state of Florida is experiencing, but the importance of continuing this program will save money in the long run. The outcomes from these reviews help to provide concise, appropriate, cost-effective therapy

addressing issues such as improper drug selection, subtherapeutic dosing, over dosage, adverse drug reactions, drug interactions, untreated indications, proper administration, lab monitoring and many other aspects of drug therapy.

The ASCP (American Society of Consultant Pharmacists) performed a study, the Fleetwood Project, which broke down the value of consultant pharmacist therapy evaluations into patient outcomes and healthcare cost savings. This study

revealed that medication reviews by consultant pharmacists optimizes patient outcomes by greater than 43 percent and saves more than \$3.6 billion a year in healthcare costs.

Although this study was focused on long-term care patients, I believe these positive outcomes would also apply to patients with disabilities.

Although cutting funding for this program might appear to save money from the budget initially, there will be much higher costs associated with poor

patient outcomes, emergency-room visits, longer hospital stays, therapy failures, over-prescribing of unnecessary or inappropriate medications, insufficient lab monitoring and in the worst-case scenario, deaths.

In light of recent events and news exposure revealing the shortcomings of care in this fragile population, it makes no sense to remove this necessary layer of protection, which may prevent deleterious outcomes.

-BOB LITMAN, registered pharmacist, Miami

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