

## WHAT IS A STEP THERAPY PROTOCOL?

- Step therapy is when approval of a medication requires prior therapeutic failure of an alternative medication that is used to treat the same medical condition.
- Step therapy is used to ensure clinically appropriate and cost-effective medications are used prior to the use of less cost-effective medications.

## HOW ARE STEP THERAPY PROTOCOLS DEVELOPED?

- Step therapy criteria are developed based on a combination of FDA approved criteria, clinical practice guidelines, peer-reviewed literature, and other available evidence-based research.
- These sources are evaluated by internal and external physicians and pharmacists. They are evaluated for strength and quality of evidence published, potential bias and conflict of interest of author or publishing organization and date of publication.
- Step therapy protocols are evaluated and updated with new FDA labeling, as clinical practice guidelines are updated, or when significant evidence-based research is published.

## CAN A MEMBER OR PROVIDER REQUEST AN EXCEPTION TO THE STEP THERAPY PROTOCOL?

- Members and providers may request an exception to the Cooperative's Step Therapy Protocol. This may be done verbally by contacting the Cooperative, or in writing. To facilitate processing, exceptions request should be mailed to:

Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire  
Step Therapy Protocol  
P.O. Box 3217  
Eau Claire, WI 54702-3217

- A decision to grant or deny any exception request based on statutory criteria will be made within 3 business days of receipt of complete, clinically relevant written documentation from the provider.
- In exigent circumstances, meaning a member is suffering from a health condition that may seriously jeopardize the member's life, health or ability to regain maximum function, the Cooperative shall grant or deny a request for an exception to the Step Therapy Protocol by the end of the next business day following receipt of complete, clinically relevant written documentation from the provider.
- If an exception request is denied, members or providers may request a review of the denial by filing a written appeal. The written appeal should include as much information pertinent to the exception as possible. The Cooperative will review this request and provide a determination within 3 business days of receipt of the written appeal and complete, clinically relevant written documentation supporting the appeal. This appeal should be mailed to:

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