

Step Therapy: Instead of “Fail First,” Put Patients First

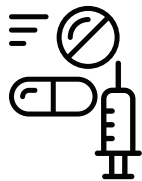
Step therapy—also known as “fail first”—is a troubling practice employed by a majority of insurers that forces patients to try therapies preferred by the insurance company before being approved for the therapy their doctor prescribed—even when doctors are certain the “preferred” option won’t be effective. Utilized by both public and private insurers, step therapy undermines the clinical judgment of healthcare providers, leads to delays in effective therapy, and puts patients’ health at unnecessary risk. It is an example of payers interfering with patient care, what many have called **practicing medicine without a license**, and we are advocating to restore the power of the physician to treat their patients appropriately and in accordance with accepted guidelines.

The American College of Rheumatology supports the bipartisan *Restoring the Patient’s Voice Act* (H.R. 2077) to put patients first by establishing reasonable parameters for the use of step therapy.

Treatments for rheumatic conditions are not one-size-fits-all and must be carefully tailored to a patient’s individualized conditions and needs. Many patients must try multiple drugs before finding one that works best for them. This process is unnecessarily drawn out by step therapy practices that require patients to try and fail drugs their doctors know will not be effective. This delay of care is a de facto denial of care. Further, patients may be subjected retroactively to step therapy when they change insurers, forcing them to step back and receive ineffective measures to document failure, even when they were already on effective therapy. For example, a patient currently on a biologic therapy that kept their disease controlled may be forced to switch off of that agent when changing insurers, to prove failure of a different “preferred” medication. Patients often must try multiple drugs before finding one that works for them, so the **ability to remain on a drug that works—without having to go through step therapy—is critical.**

Step Therapy Hurts Patients

A 2016 Arthritis Foundation survey found that most respondents experienced negative health effects from delays in getting on the right treatment. According to the survey:



Over 50% of all patients reported having to try two or more different drugs prior to getting the one their doctor had originally ordered



Step therapy was stopped in 39% of cases because the drugs were ineffective, and 20% of the time due to worsening conditions



Nearly 25% of patients who switched insurance providers were **required to repeat step therapy** with their new carrier

Congress: Support the *Restoring the Patient’s Voice Act* (H.R. 2077)

- ✓ **Creates a clear and transparent process** for patients with employer-sponsored insurance to seek exceptions to step therapy.
- ✓ **Establishes a reasonable and clear timeframe** for override decisions and requires insurers to consider the patient’s medical history and the provider’s expertise in partnership with their own before denying a patient medically necessary treatment.
- ✓ **Bipartisan legislation** sponsored by Reps. Brad Wenstrup (R-OH) and Raul Ruiz (D-CA)—both physicians who have encountered step therapy in their own practices.
- ✓ **At least 56 bipartisan** co-sponsors to date.
- ✓ **House:** Co-sponsor H.R. 2077.
- ✓ **Senate:** Introduce companion legislation to H.R. 2077.



**AMERICAN COLLEGE
OF RHEUMATOLOGY**
EDUCATION • TREATMENT • RESEARCH

Specialists in Arthritis Care and Research

2200 Lake Boulevard NE, Atlanta, GA 30319

Phone: (404) 633-3777 · Fax: (404) 633-1870

www.rheumatology.org · info@rheumatology.org