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Sent: Friday, February 03, 2006 9:03 AM
Subject: Transition Supply extended to 90 days

In case you haven't seen the Secretary's comments in the newspapers regarding extension of the transitional supply.

More progress is needed... beginning with more transitional drug coverage

Secretary Leavitt announced that Medicare will notify plans that the 30-day transitional coverage period in effect will continue for 60 more days – in effect, this means that plans will provide up to 90 days of coverage for a beneficiary's current drugs. This provides more time for beneficiaries to find out if they can save by using other drugs that work in a very similar way and cost significantly less. This action reinforces steps already taken by many plans, like extending their transitional coverage, to help assure a smooth transition for beneficiaries.

Leavitt noted that call wait times for pharmacists and customers had been "unacceptable," and announced efforts to get them significantly reduced. The call-wait time for 1-800-MEDICARE has been around 5 minutes since the beginning of January, and, at the end of the month, the time was even shorter (less than a minute). While most plans have also taken steps to reduce wait times for customers and pharmacists to acceptable levels, HHS will increase its monitoring and reporting of drug plan wait times and will take corrective actions in the specific cases where plans do not improve.

"The measure of our success should not be that we have no unexpected problems at the outset but rather that we find, fix and finish with these problems quickly so that all seniors have access to coverage that saves them money, keeps them healthier and gives them peace of mind," said Secretary Leavitt.