

Delays and Denials for Branded Medication Fills Due to Prior Authorization

HPR107

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Research Question

For branded medication prescriptions that are initially rejected by the prior authorization (PA) review,

1. how many are eventually approved?
2. how much time does this adjudication process require?
3. What are the factors that drive variation in care delay and eventual denial?

Data & Method

- Using 2024 IQVIA FIA claims data
 - All payer drug claims collected by a national sample of retail pharmacies
 - Include claim adjudication details
- Group raw claims into attempted prescription fills (patient-prescriber-drug molecule-prescription written days-plan-refill status)
- Final analytic sample: 205,896 prescription fill attempts with initial PA rejection and completed adjudication process:
 - 156,848 patients, 104,501 prescribing clinicians, 88 branded drug molecules
- Outcomes: same-day processing and final approval
- Logistics models assessing claim, prescription, prescriber, patient, and payer characteristics that drive variation in the 2 outcomes

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Headline Results: Among 205,896 Attempted Prescription Fills with Initial PA Reject

35%

Processed in same day

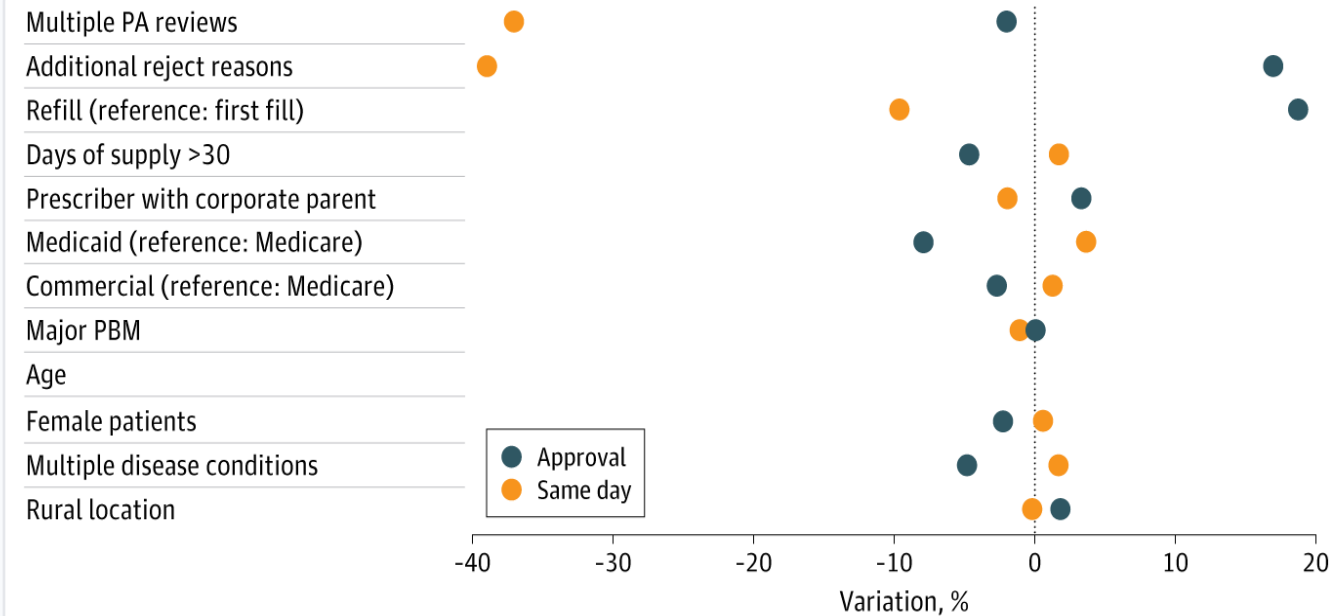
6 days

Median delay if not same day

54%

Ultimately approved

Factors Driving Variation in Same-day Adjudication and Ultimate Approval

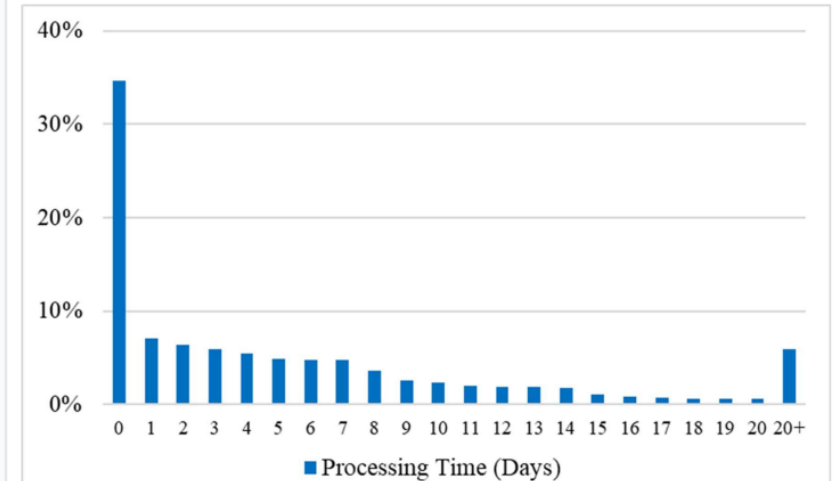


Marginal effect predictions are measured in probability and converted from the logistics regression estimates. Drug molecule fixed effects included; 95% CIs indicated in error bars. Abbreviations: PBM, pharmacy benefit manager. ref., reference group.

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Distribution of Processing Time after Initial Reject



Interpretation & Policy/Payer Relevance

- PA is not a single binary hurdle. The process itself creates measurable access friction.
- Multiple Rounds of PA reviews and additional rejection reasons drive the longest processing delays.
- Patients with Medicaid coverage and multiple conditions faced lower final approval rates.
- PA reform should target not only whether PA exists, but also the operational frictions that create repeated reviews, delays, and denials.
 - Especially cases with high likelihood of eventual approval but long processing times

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