

Identifying Meaningful Patient Savings on Generics: Direct-to-Consumer Prices Versus Commercial Insurance Cost Sharing

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Background

- Direct-to-consumer (DTC) pharmacy models provide transparent pricing and allow drugs to be purchased without using health insurance
- DTC pharmacies aim to help patients afford generic prescriptions.
- Their usefulness for the commercially insured has been in question, particularly during cost-sharing phases¹⁻³

Objective

- To analyze the frequency and magnitude of savings from purchasing generic prescriptions through the Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drug Company (MCCPDC), a DTC pharmacy, compared with cost sharing under employer-sponsored insurance, stratified by patients' out-of-pocket cost levels.

Methods

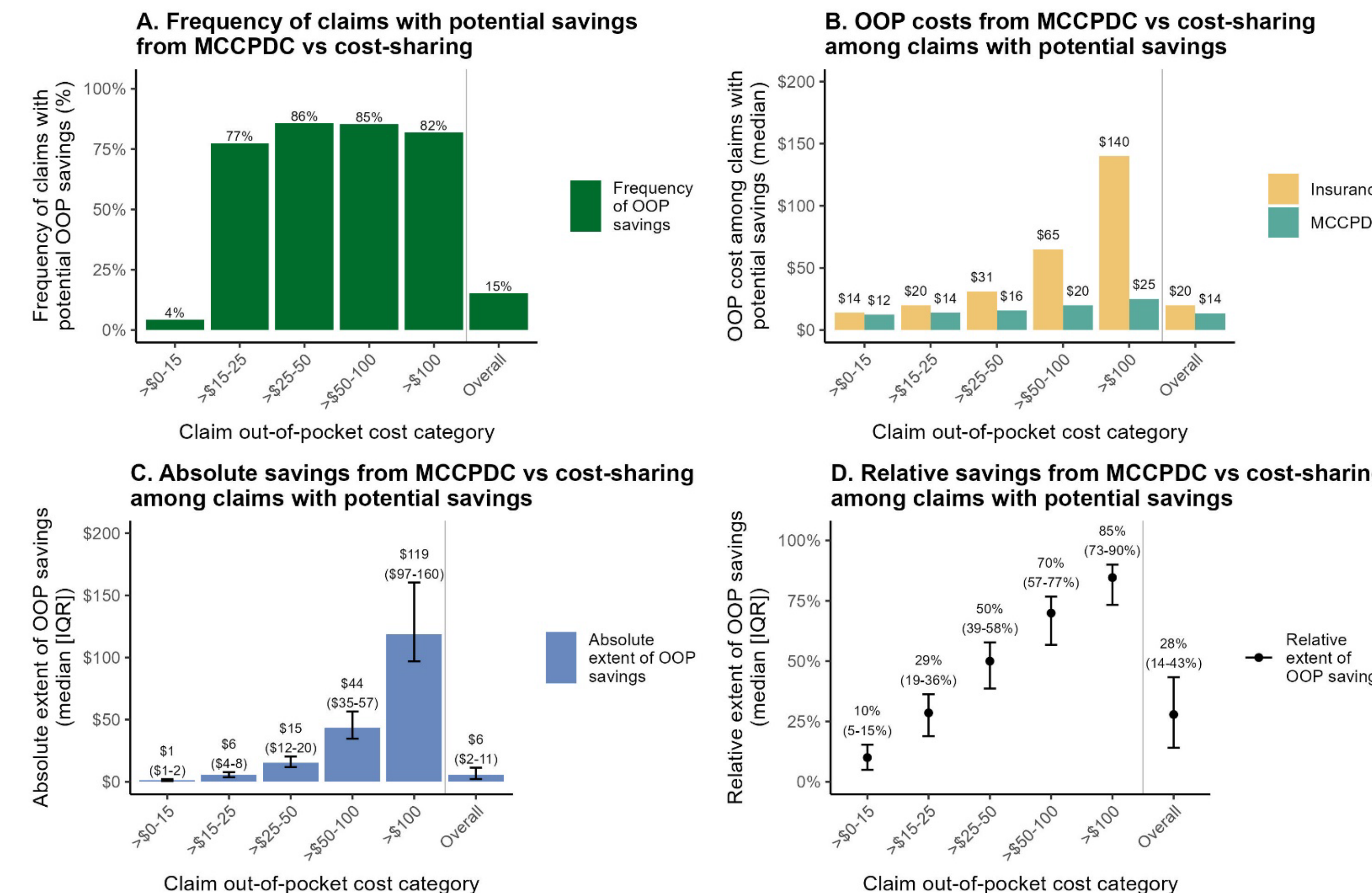
- Data: Merative MarketScan (1/2024-12/2024) and MCCPDC (2025)⁴
- Copayment or coinsurance amounts for filled generic prescription claims (tablets + capsules) matched with MCCPDC direct purchase prices (including a \$5.25 shipping fee)
- Excluded drugs:
 - Drugs with zero-cost sharing requirement (8.2% of claims) under the ACA
 - Controlled substances (10.6% of claims) or other generics subject to REMS requirements (0.3% of claims) which are unavailable through MCCPDC
- MCCPDC prices were adjusted to 2024 levels using the drug-specific percentage change in acquisition cost from NADAC.
- Outcomes: Savings (frequency and extent) through MCCPDC, stratified by prescription OOP cost categories: \$0-\$15, \$15-\$25, \$25-\$50, \$50-\$100, >\$100.
- We identified areas where high out-of-pocket costs were frequent by
 - Isolating generic claims where OOP>\$100 and selecting the top 50 drugs with the greatest number of claims
 - Categorizing these drugs by disease area
 - Calculating the median (IQR) savings across claims within each disease area.

Results

Table: Availability of generic prescriptions through MCCPDC

Generic Prescription OOP Cost Category Under Insurance	No. of individuals in MarketScan database	No. of generic drugs in MarketScan database	No. (%) of generic drugs in MarketScan available for purchase through MCCPDC	No. of generic claims in MarketScan database	No. (%) of generic claims in MarketScan database for drugs available for purchase through MCCPDC
>\$0-15	5,637,824	563	503 (89.3%)	53,245,984	51,503,662 (96.7%)
>\$15-25	1,272,099	541	487 (90.0%)	5,721,524	5,602,872 (97.9%)
>\$25-50	652,246	550	493 (89.6%)	2,797,528	2,729,403 (97.6%)
>\$50-100	84,306	531	476 (89.6%)	270,867	253,163 (93.5%)
>\$100	36,056	472	423 (89.6%)	119,337	111,869 (93.7%)
Overall	5,902,734	573	506 (88.3%)	62,155,240	60,200,969 (96.9%)

Figure: Frequency and extent of OOP savings if prescriptions were obtained via direct cash purchase from MCCPDC vs through insurance cost-sharing



Disease areas with drugs that most frequently had high cost sharing (median [IQR] savings)

- **Oncology** (\$468 [IQR, \$123 to \$1905])
 - Abiraterone, capecitabine, dasatinib, imatinib
- **Urology** (\$139 [IQR, \$114 to \$213])
 - Sildenafil, tadalafil
- **Psychiatry** (\$136 [IQR, \$102 to \$224])
 - Atomoxetine, bupropion, desvenlafaxine, venlafaxine
- **Neurology** (\$133 [IQR, \$99 to \$279])
 - Lamotrigine, lurasidone, teriflunomide, topiramate
- **Gastrointestinal** (\$129 [IQR, \$84 to \$219])
 - Mesalamine, prucalopride
- **Endocrine** (\$120 [IQR, \$114 to \$122])
 - Levothyroxine sodium
- **Cardiology** (\$110 [IQR, \$87 to \$160])
 - Prasugrel, rivaroxaban, ticagrelor, valsartan
- **Transplant** (\$100 [IQR, \$71 to \$208])
 - Tacrolimus

Discussion

- Patients with employer-sponsored insurance facing drug-affordability challenges may consider DTC pharmacies whenever their generic prescription's copayment or coinsurance exceeds \$15, where savings are frequent (nearly 80%).
- They should particularly consider DTC pharmacies for higher out-of-pocket cost drugs, where savings are often considerable.
- Our results also allow prescribers to familiarize themselves with some higher-cost generics relevant to their disease focus currently available through the MCCPDC.
- Our study emphasizes the need for real-time prescription benefit (RTPB) tools to include DTC pharmacy pricing routinely.⁵

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