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With rising health care costs and the advent of TRICARE For Life, the price tag for military health care has doubled since the beginning of 2001. It should not surprise any retiree that Department of Defense (DoD) has signaled its intent to mitigate costs where possible while reviewing the entire military health care system.

One low hanging fruit is the TRICARE Pharmacy program and the ongoing debate over brand-name and generic drugs. For years now, the mandatory generic drug program has been in effect requiring retail and mail-order prescriptions to be filled with a generic product instead of a brand name, if one is available. Most retirees understand the generic drug program. However, the creation of the non-formulary list is still new to most retirees.

The non-formulary list is a third drug category (\$22 cost), with generic (\$3 cost) and brand-name (\$9 cost) being the other two categories. The non-formulary list will be populated with medications that have lower cost alternatives whether brand-name or generic.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs), after taking recommendations from the DoD Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee and the Beneficiary Advisory Panel (BAP) into consideration, has announced the selection of three medications to be placed in the non-

# TRICARE Pharmacy Non-Formulary List

(Some prescriptions may cost you more)

By Tom McAtee

formulary category. They are: Nexium® (esomeprazole), a medication for ulcers and other stomach problems; and Teveten® (eprosartan) plus Teveten HCT® (eprosartan with hydrochlorothiazide), both used to treat high blood pressure. Effective 17 July 2005, military beneficiaries will pay \$22 for up to a 30- or 90-day supply of these medications, depending on whether they fill the prescription at a TRICARE retail network pharmacy or through the TRICARE mail order pharmacy. Beneficiaries will pay the higher of \$22 or 20 percent in retail non-network pharmacies.

If currently using Nexium®, Teveten® or Teveten HCT®, you may wish to consult your doctor. A summary of therapeutic alternatives to the non-formulary medications and their corresponding cost share are:

1. Nexium® \$22, Omeprazole \$3, AcipHex® \$9, Protonix® \$9, Prevacid® \$9, Zegrid® \$9;
2. Teveten® \$22, Avapro® \$9, Cozaar® \$9, Diovan® \$9, Micardis® \$9, Atacand® \$9, and Benicar® \$9;
3. Teveten HCT® \$22, Avalide® \$9, Hyzaar® \$9, Diovan HCT® \$9, Micardis HCT® \$9, Atacand HCT® \$9, and Benicar HCT® \$9.

If your doctor establishes a medical necessity for using Nexium®, Teveten®, or Teveten HCT®, you will qualify for the \$9 cost share for up to a 30-day retail supply or up to a 90-day mail-order supply. Military treatment facilities (MTFs) will no longer have Nexium®, Teveten®, or Teveten HCT® on their local formularies.

MTFs will be able to fill non-formulary requests for these medications only if both of the following conditions are met:

1. A MTF provider writes the prescription; and,
2. Medical necessity is established for these products.

MTFs may (but are not required to) fill a Nexium®, Teveten®, or Teveten HCT® prescription written by a non-MTF provider to whom the patient was referred, as long as medical necessity has been established. Active duty members pay no cost shares; and unless medical necessity is established, they may NOT obtain non-formulary drugs. **IMPORTANT REMINDER:** If you already have a medical necessity determination for Nexium® on file with the mail-order program, you are required to reestablish medical necessity for the drug under the medical necessity criteria above in order to receive Nexium® at the \$9 formulary cost share. Existing TMOP medical necessity determinations for Nexium will become invalid on 17 July 2005. For more information about TRICARE Mail-Order Program, you can call (866) 363-8667 or visit the Express-Scripts, Inc. Web site at <[www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/tmop\\_contact.cfm](http://www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/tmop_contact.cfm)>. For TRICARE Retail Program, you may also contact the customer service line at (866) 363-8779, or visit <[www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/trrx\\_contact.cfm](http://www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/trrx_contact.cfm)>.

The formulary search tool for additional information about various medications, availability, and costs may be found at <[www.tricareformularysearch.org](http://www.tricareformularysearch.org)>. ↴