Top Ten Things to Know

Presidential Advisory: American Heart Association Principles on the Accessibility and Affordability of Drugs and Biologics

1. In 2015, net U.S. spending on pharmaceuticals reached $309.5 billion, an 8.5% increase from the year before, and is expected to reach between $370 and $400 billion by 2020.

2. Research shows that when passed onto patients, high prices reduce medication adherence and can lead to negative health outcomes.

3. To support patients in addressing rising drug costs and the associated adverse health impacts that consequently occur, the AHA developed a set of principles to guide its advocacy and help frame the ongoing debate.

4. It is in the best interest of patients that therapeutic innovation continues, and high-value products are made available. The lack of medication affordability, therefore, threatens to have detrimental effects on individual patient’s health and limit the Association’s achievement of its population impact goal.

5. Additionally, disparities of care are potentially exacerbated by placing many drugs beyond the financial reach of low income and average wage families, and perpetuating a system of “haves” and “have nots.” Access to new therapies, as well as established generics, becomes based on economic condition.

6. A 2012 literature review found that increased cost sharing by patients decreased medication adherence in 85% of the studies reviewed, and adversely impacted health outcomes in 76% of the studies.

7. According to a 2015 Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll, 24% of respondents who were currently taking a prescription medication reported that they or a family member had not filled a prescription due to cost.

8. According to the same Tracking Poll, 19% reported that they or a family member had cut pills in half or skipped doses of their medication.

9. The American Heart Association has consistently advocated for equity and affordability. It is imperative that the Association continue this work as the voice of patients and work toward ensuring equitable access for all.

10. As an evidence-based patient advocacy organization dedicated to improving the cardiovascular health of all Americans, the American Heart Association has a unique role in advocating for treatments, including medicines that are available, affordable, and accessible to patients.