



JUL 17 2009

7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21244-1850

Ms. Miriam C. JM Sturkenboom  
President  
International Society of Pharmacoepidemiology  
5272 River Road, Suite 630  
Bethesda, MD 20816

Dear Ms. Sturkenboom:

I am responding to your letter to Secretary Sebelius in regard to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) document, "*Possible Medicare Part D Public Use and Supplemental Characteristics Files.*" The Secretary has asked that I respond to the suggestions of the International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology.

I appreciate the Society's interests in promoting the health of the public by advocating for the use of Part D prescription drug data. We welcome the Society's suggestions as how best to use this rich database.

As you know, the Medicare Part D prescription drug data is a new resource. As CMS staff become more familiar with this data and as we have received comments from the public, we have started to develop enhancements and supplemental files to the Part D drug database. One of the primary principles in developing new features is to lower barriers to obtaining the data while adequately protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the patient and any commercially sensitive data. At the end of June, CMS made several major presentations at the annual AcademyHealth conference to outline the new Medicare drug data features that will soon become available. CMS is planning a conference in the fall to publicize the availability of this data and offer technical training on these enhancements.

Finally, we concur with your major suggestion that CMS should make the actual date of service available to researchers. We strive to work with researchers to provide them with the appropriate data to support their study, within our regulatory data release framework.

Page 2 – Ms. Miriam C. JM Sturkenboom

I assure you that CMS will fully consider your recommendations on how to make Part D data accessible to the public for research purposes as well as how to educate the public at large. Thank you for taking the time to personally share your Society's valuable perspective on the proposed CMS Medicare Part D public use files. CMS welcomes any future suggestions you may have and we appreciate your careful review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Love", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Timothy P. Love

Director

Office of Research, Development, and Information