

Coordinating Medication Access Throughout the Patient Experience



Ensuring patients have timely access to prescribed medications requires integrated coordination across multiple stakeholders. Misalignment at any point along the care continuum can make it harder for patients to get the medications they need.

65% of patients experience some form of delay in accessing prescribed medication.¹

Learn more about the roles of six key stakeholders and how they can come together to create a more seamless medication access experience for patients.

1 PRESCRIBER

Healthcare providers, like physicians and nurse practitioners, are the frontline of medication access. Administrative barriers such as prior authorization and step therapy can delay care.

94% of physicians report that prior authorization delays necessary treatment.¹

Prescribers can help improve medication access by:



Staying updated on formulary changes and insurance requirements



Advocating for patients by appealing denials and working with pharmacies to resolve access issues



Educating patients about the importance of adherence and available support programs

2 PHARMACY BENEFIT MANAGERS (PBMs)

PBMs are intermediaries in the prescription drug supply chain for health plans. They negotiate prices and discounts with manufacturers, process pharmacy claims, and design formularies that determine which medications are covered at what cost. **Just three PBMs control nearly 80% of the market today.²** PBMs can:



Use purchasing power to negotiate lower prices and reduce out-of-pocket costs for patients



Connect patients with financial assistance programs



Implement innovative cost-sharing programs, limiting costs for common drugs and providing tools to help patients compare drug prices

1. [Cover My Meds. \(2025\). 2025 Medication Access Report](#)

2. [Alliance for Patient Access. \(2023\). Pharmacy Benefit Managers' Impact on Patient Access.](#)

3 HEALTH SYSTEM

Health systems determine which medications are available through formulary management and integration of care. Clinical advocates present new therapies to Pharmacy and Therapeutics committees to review and determine if they should be included on the health system's list of available prescription drugs, also known as a formulary.

Health systems can:

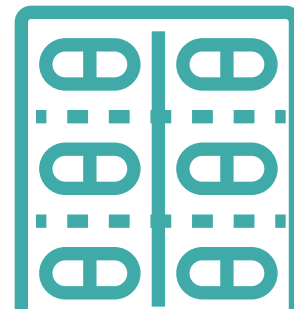
- ✓ Streamline formulary review processes to reduce delays in access to innovative therapies
- ✓ Expand access to specialty medications through partnerships with external pharmacies to reduce administrative burdens

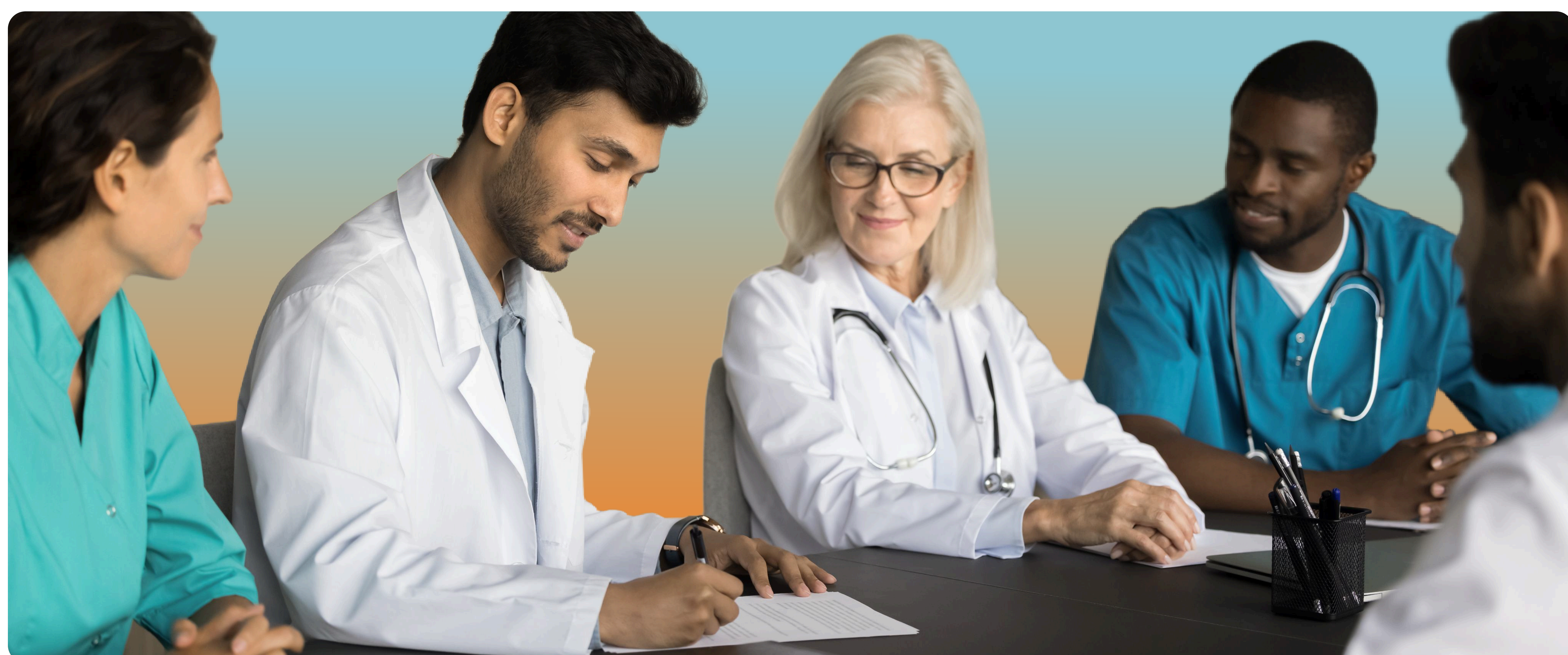
4 HEALTH PLAN PAYER

Health plan payers, including insurance companies and government programs like Medicare, set coverage policies, copays, and requirements for prior authorization or step therapy. Over time, coverage has become more restrictive, and half of all covered drugs now require prior authorization.

Medicare formularies cover just over half of FDA-approved drugs, down from 75% in 2010.³

Payers can improve medication access by:

-  Simplifying and expediting prior authorization processes to minimize treatment delays
-  Expanding formulary coverage to include a broader range of therapies
-  Implementing value-based reimbursement designs that lower out-of-pocket costs



3. [GoodRx. \(2024\). The Big Pinch](#)

5 PHARMACY

Pharmacies are one of the final links in the medication access chain, responsible for dispensing drugs and supporting patients. They purchase medications from wholesalers, decide which drugs to stock, and handle insurance verification and prior authorization requests.

Pharmacists can play a crucial role in patient education and cost management, especially for underserved populations, by:

- ✓ Proactively identifying and resolving insurance or supply issues to prevent delays
- ✓ Educating patients about financial assistance options
- ✓ Collaborating with prescribers and payers to streamline prior authorization and medication substitution processes

6 PATIENT

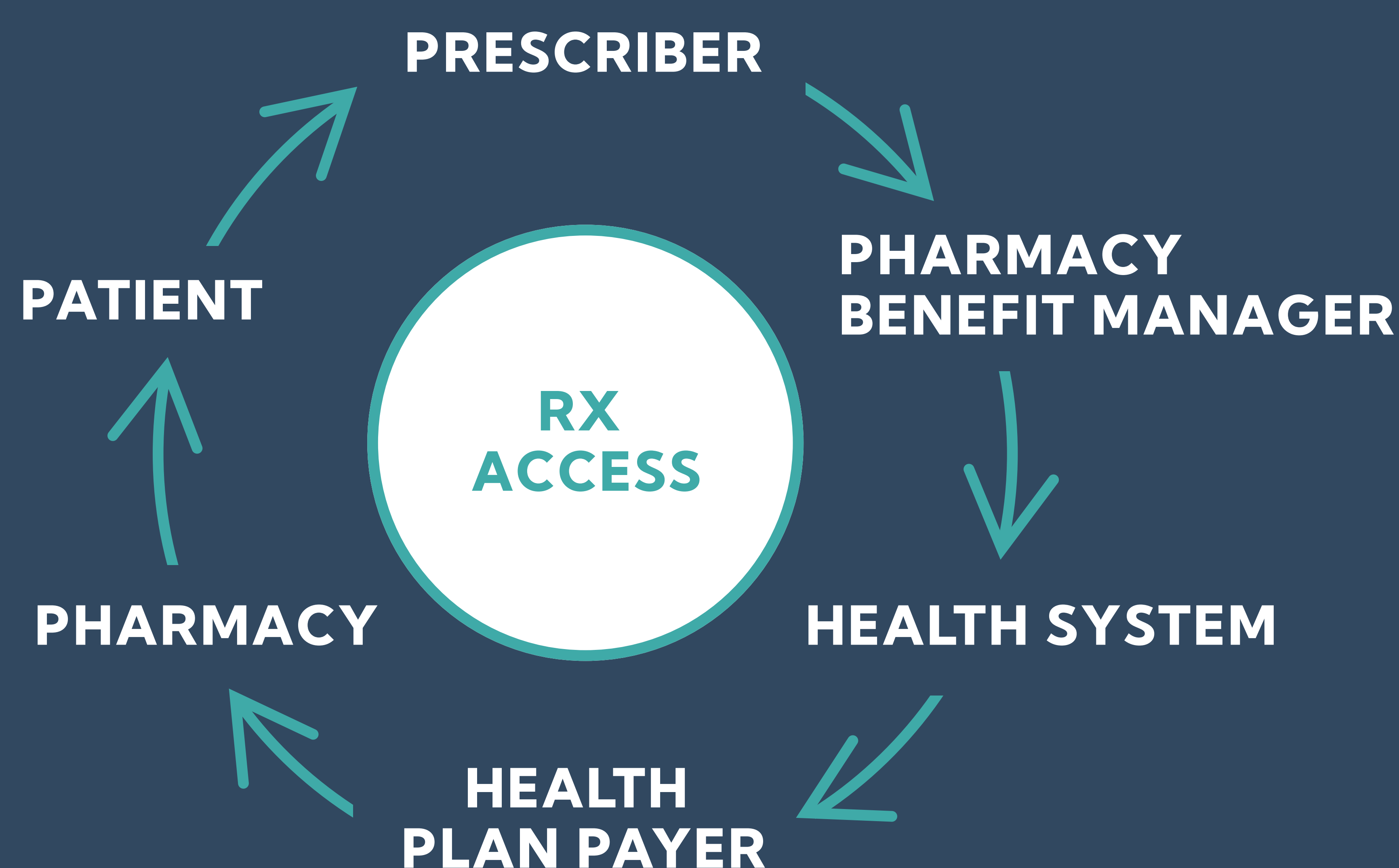
Patients are at the center of medication access, yet barriers such as cost, insurance coverage limitations, and drug shortages can disrupt access. Location, accessibility, and knowledge can further exacerbate disparities in access.

About 1 in 3 Americans do not fill a prescription sent to the pharmacy, with high out-of-pocket expenses cited as the leading reason.⁴

While many of these elements can feel out of their control, patients should feel empowered to:

-  Communicate concerns openly with their providers and pharmacists
-  Learn about resources such as patient assistance programs, copay cards, and pharmacy discount programs

When these six stakeholders come together, they can bring down barriers at each step to ensure all patients have access to the right treatments at the right time.



4. GoodRx. (2025). Nearly a Third of Americans Aren't Filling Their Prescriptions Because of High Costs