

Florida drug costs significantly higher than other study states

The payment per claim for prescription drugs used to treat injured workers in Florida was nearly 40 percent higher than in most study states, according to the Workers Compensation Research Institute.

The 16-state study by WCRI found that the average payment per claim for prescription drugs in Florida's workers' comp system was \$565 -- 38 percent higher than the median of the study states. Researchers said the main reason for the higher prescription costs was that some physicians wrote prescriptions and dispensed the prescribed medications directly to their patients. When physicians dispensed prescription drugs, the study concluded, they often were paid much more than pharmacies for the same prescription.

The study -- *Prescription Benchmarks for Florida* -- found that some Florida physicians wrote prescriptions more often for certain drugs that were especially profitable. For example, Carisoprodol, a muscle relaxant, was prescribed for 11 percent of injured workers in Florida compared to 2 to 4 percent in most other study states.

Researchers noted that financial incentives may help explain more frequent prescription of the drug. The price per pill paid to Florida physician dispensers for Carisoprodol was four times higher than if the same prescription was filled at pharmacies in the state.

The study also found that the average number of prescriptions per claim in Florida was 17 percent higher than in the median state. Similar results could be seen in the average number of pills per claim, researchers said.

WCRI found that that prices paid to Florida pharmacies were at the median of the 16 study states, due to its typical pharmacy fee schedule, which is set at the level of the average wholesale price.