

# Advocacy Insights

# PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

With Emma Watson, MPH

*American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network*



## **Q: What's the best way to explain prior authorization?**

It's best understood in layman's terms.

If I ask a group of patients if they've had any issues with prior authorization, no one will raise their hand. But when I break it down and ask if anyone has had to prove to their health plan that they need a medication, heads start nodding. Hands shoot up.

## **Q: Where does prior authorization make sense?**

It makes sense for the U.S. health care system to have checks and balances. But in its current form, prior authorization is a one-size-fits-all approach that can sometimes lead to delays in care and denials for treatments.

The process needs to be streamlined and made efficient. It also needs to be transparent and accessible for both patients and providers.

## **Q: What impact does prior authorization have on cancer patients specifically?**

It can mean cancer patients have to wait longer to start a new treatment or continue to experience a side effect

that impacts their quality of life. Waiting days, weeks or months for treatment access can also dismantle patients mentally and emotionally. These patients and their loved ones are already going through a stressful time; they don't need added barriers.

We also see glaring issues with medication adherence when there are long delays. The process gets so convoluted that patients give up.

## **Q: How do you advise patients to talk about prior authorization when they visit their legislators?**

I tell them: Share your story. When legislators hear real-life stories it humanizes the issue. It takes something abstract and confusing and makes it much more tangible.

## **Q: What is it about the issue of prior authorization that really resonates with people?**

At some point or another, we are all going to be patients, and we deserve access to care. Keeping sick patients in limbo, allowing symptoms to go unchecked and diseases to progress is not something anyone wants for themselves or their loved ones.



Patient Access Collaborative

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