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**WASHINGTON, Dec. 21, 2006 (UPI)** -- In an interview with United Press International, Roba Whiteley, executive director of the prescription-drug assistance program Together Rx Access, discusses how the consortium's ten member pharmaceutical companies are offering prescription drugs that treat a variety of conditions to people who have no drug coverage and can't afford to buy the medicines at their full price.

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### ***Q: Which drug companies are involved in Together Rx Access?***

**A:** Abbott Laboratories, AstraZeneca, Bristol Myers-Squibb, GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis, Pfizer, Takeda, TAPP, Johnson & Johnson, and Sanofi-aventis.

We're hoping as we approach '07 and more companies are aware of this important healthcare issue of being uninsured in America, that we have additional companies who join us, so that we can expand our offering from what is currently savings on over 300 brand-name prescription products to many more products (so) people can get the drug that's right for the condition or conditions they have.

### ***Q: How is this group different from the heavily promoted Partnership for Prescription Assistance?***

**A:** Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA) is a clearinghouse for over 475 public and private programs that can help people across the nation who lack healthcare coverage save money on their prescription products and sometimes, actually get their products for free.

(It) is made possible by the trade group of the pharmaceutical industry, (the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America) and takes information by phone or over the Web from people who lack (health) coverage and lack prescription drug coverage <<http://www.upi.com/HealthBusiness/view.php?StoryID=20061221-023519-3174r>> , to match them to other programs, public and private, that can save them money, or sometimes help them get their medicines for free.

Together Rx Access is one of the private-sector programs that people can link to through the PPA clearinghouse. We work in a very close collaborative way with the PPA to get the word out about the importance of people who don't have coverage contacting PPA to see if there is help for them. We are also the largest private-sector (drug) savings programs that the PPA refers (people) to.

### ***Q: How does someone qualify for the program?***

**A:** To qualify, a person cannot be eligible for Medicare -- this is for the non-Medicare, uninsured population -- and have no prescription <<http://www.upi.com/HealthBusiness/view.php?StoryID=20061221-023519-3174r>> drug coverage, either private or public. They also need to be a legal U.S. resident and, by the way, we require no documentation; we take people at their word. So we simply ask the question, 'Are you a legal U.S. resident?' That could mean that you're a citizen, it could mean you have a green card, it could mean you're on a student visa. But (it means) you are documented and here legally.

There is fourth eligibility requirement: household income. For example, if you're an individual who earns \$30,000 (per year) or less, or a family of four who earns \$60,000 or less (and) have no prescription drug coverage, you would qualify for the program.

### ***Q: How does Together Rx Access work?***

**A:** Our program is about having a card that you can take to your neighborhood pharmacy that can give you real savings right at the counter. Now, with the card, you can also save money on generic products.

**Q: What about drugs for chronic illnesses? Can people receive these drugs indefinitely, or is there some sort of cap on access?**

**A:** There's no limit to the number of times you can use that card.

**Q: What is the typical savings on a given drug?**

**A:** We find that most people save between 25 percent and 40 percent on brand-name products.

**Q: Do the companies set any kind of parameters on what type of drugs they'll offer at a discount, i.e., could a person get a so-called "lifestyle" drug like Viagra via the program?**

**A:** Each member company decides which of their retail products will be contributed to the program. As I mentioned, we have a variety of products that are used to treat chronic conditions, but we also have a number of products that are used for acute conditions and some of them for what some might call "quality of life" issues or "lifestyle" issues. If people want to find out what products are offered in the program, they can visit our Web site, [www.Togetherrxaccess.com](http://www.Togetherrxaccess.com), click on the drug icon and that will show all of the products that are available at a savings by using the card.

**Q: How many people are currently taking advantage of the program?**

**A:** We now have nearly 800,000 people who are enrolled in the Together Rx Access program. There are people who need medicine everyday for the chronic conditions that many Americans suffer from: diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, asthma, allergies, cancer, mental health problems. And we know that, particularly with chronic conditions, people need to be able to have continuity of care with their medicines (so) we're working with patient advocacy groups in disease areas across this nation to get the word out through their network, so (patients) know the program is available.

**Q: What's in it for the drug companies?**

**A:** I think what is in it for the pharmaceutical companies is a sense of doing the right thing, and showing themselves to be good corporate citizens and good citizens in communities across the nation. This is the real deal; there's no catch to this program.

**Learn more about the card at [TogetherRxAccess.com](http://TogetherRxAccess.com)**

