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KING VS. BURWELL STILL LEAVES MILLIONS STRUGGLING TO FIND AFFORDABLE MEDICATION

Millions of Americans Impacted by the Lack of Access to Affordable Medication

ST. LOUIS, MO. (June 25, 2015) — Despite the ruling by the Supreme Court in the King vs. Burwell case to uphold a key regulation supporting the Affordable Care Act allowing subsidies for state-run and federal exchanges, it remains that in this great nation, affordable healthcare for individuals and families is not something that can be easily attained, assured or maintained. The process that led to the ruling exemplifies how challenging having fundamental healthcare is, has become and will be for millions of Americans.

While the primary focus is on providing access to healthcare for millions of Americans, a recent Families USA study points to another significant and growing consideration in the access to healthcare conversation: affordable medications. Among the more than 6,000,000 that are newly insured through the public exchanges, as many as 18.3% still went without the medications they needed because of high deductibles and copays. The impact of this inability to afford necessary medication is reflected in the growing number of non-adherence based treatment failures and deaths. The CDC reports that medication related non-adherence contributes to 125,000 deaths per year.

“In this country, those numbers are too high,” said Michael Holmes, President of Rx Outreach, the nation’s largest nonprofit pharmacy. “The supreme court decision does not eliminate the problem. For millions of Americans, this is where it begins. There are still 28 million that remain uninsured,” he said. “The continued focus on finding solutions to provide access to affordable healthcare is critically important. However, access to affordable healthcare does not necessarily translate to access to affordable medication and it should.”

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Despite credible data and the ongoing and persistent mission based efforts of organizations like Rx Outreach, Needy Meds, the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics and community groups in practically every city, the growing need for access to affordable medication receives insufficient attention. The lack of significant access to affordable medication means that people are forced to make gut wrenching choices between paying for their medication or eating, paying rent, utilities and other life necessities. The lack of access also leads to greater medication related non-adherence. The CDC reported that the direct cost of non-adherence is \$100 to \$289 billion. A financial strain on an already strained healthcare system.

“There is a great need for affordable medication,” said Richard Sagall, President of Needy Meds, a leading provider of free information on how and where to access affordable medication. “We help and will continue to help a growing number of people, insured and uninsured, find affordable medication,” he said. “The choices and sacrifices that people are making in order to afford medicine are sad. Hard to believe this is happening here. But we are committed to help.”

The King vs. Burwell conversation and decision has refocused attention on the Affordable Care Act. However, it also reminds us that the Affordable Care Act does not and will not cover everyone. There is a well-documented gap in the American healthcare system for 28 million Americans that still cannot afford insurance or the cost of the medication they need.

“The affordable medication gap in our healthcare system will only continue to grow,” said Nichol Lamoureux, CEO of the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics. “Our member clinics are on the front line serving in communities all across the country. We hear and see the stories every day. In fact, our member clinics have reported demand for service has increased by 40%.”

The Affordable Care Act has and now, will continue to help serve those in need of affordable healthcare. However, for the thousands of individuals and organizations standing and serving in the gap between affordable healthcare and affordable medication, there remain two facts that to date have evaded serious solution oriented public discussion. 1) For millions of insured and uninsured Americans, access to affordable healthcare does not equate to affordable medication and 2) 28 million people remain outside of the Affordable Care Act and in need of access to affordable medication.

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About Rx Outreach

Headquartered in St. Louis, MO., Rx Outreach is the nation's largest nonprofit, fully-licensed, mail order patient assistance program (PAP). As a PAP, Rx Outreach offers more than 250 medications at an affordable cost for low income individuals and families that earn less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level, insured or uninsured. *Rx Outreach* is fully licensed to serve all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Since 2010, Rx Outreach has served more than 200,000 and saved them \$300,000,000. For more information or to apply please write to P.O. Box 66536, St. Louis, MO 63166-6536, call 1-888-796-1234, or visit www.rxoutreach.org.

About NeedyMeds

NeedyMeds, a national nonprofit, is a comprehensive and reliable source of information on assistance programs available for people having difficulties paying for their medications or health care. The website www.needy meds.org is visited by approximately 10,000 people each workday. NeedyMeds' information is always free, easy to access, and updated regularly. Unlike similar sites, NeedyMeds requires no registration and gathers no identifiable information on site visitors.

About The National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics

The National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics is the only nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is solely focused on the issues and needs of more than 1,200 Free and Charitable Clinics and the people they serve in the United States. Founded in 2001 and headquartered near Washington, D.C., the NAFC is an effective advocate for the issues and concerns of Free and Charitable Clinics, their volunteer workforce of doctors, dentists, nurses, therapists, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, technicians and other health care professionals, as well as the patients served by Free and Charitable Clinics in communities throughout the nation. For more information, go to www.nafclinics.org.