

Dr. Ross Maltz

Columbus, Ohio

Dr. Ross Maltz is an attending Pediatric Gastroenterologist at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. He was very engaged in advocating for the Ohio step therapy reform law that passed in 2019.

In comparing the current situation to before the bill was signed into law, he said that his "gut feeling is that Ohio is making huge steps with step therapy." He acknowledges that there may be a combination of reasons for improved access to prescription drugs locally, including the advent of biosimilars on the market. However, the law does require that step therapy protocols be based on clinical guidelines, and other medical or scientific evidence, and he has noticed that many step therapy protocols are less egregious than prior to the law's passage.



Dr. Maltz's staff track denials and responses to exception requests and they find that most exception requests are going through. But two stuck out to him recently because they were a "major struggle." Both were patients with very early onset IBD; insurance argued that anti-TNF drugs were not FDA-approved in patients younger than six. According to Dr. Maltz, NO drugs are approved for this population. For the first patient, the appeals process played out within the statutory timeline. For the second patient, the ultimate approval was time-consuming and came three days after the second appeal.

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Fortunately, Dr. Maltz has staff dedicated to challenging adverse insurance decisions. The percentage of approvals within five days is high, which aligns with the new statutory timeline. However, some plans he works with are commercial plans from employers which may be exempt from the state law, and account for longer step therapy battles.

At the end of the day, Dr. Maltz sees progress, but step therapy and other denials continue to be an issue. He advocates for passage of a federal law, however long it takes, so that his patients with employer plans are able to get the medications they need. He is also struggling to get approval for escalating treatment doses, which is not within the purview of step therapy laws. Easing the burden and limiting insurance denials on patients to get access to the appropriate medications in a timely matter will continue to be his "passion project."