What is a specialty drug?

A specialty drug possesses any number of these common attributes:\(^1\)

- Prescribed for a person with a complex or chronic medical condition
- Treats rare or orphan diseases
- Requires advanced patient education, adherence, and support
- Is oral, injectable, inhalable, or infusible
- Has a high monthly cost
- Has unique storage or shipment requirements
- Is not stocked at a majority of retail pharmacies

What are specialty pharmacies?

- Payer-aligned specialty pharmacies have the **technology and clinical expertise** to enhance the safety, quality, and affordability of care for patients receiving specialty medications
- Pharmacists and clinicians at specialty pharmacies offer support to patients with complex medical conditions, such as:
  - Blood disorders
  - Cancer
  - Crohn’s disease
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Infertility
  - Multiple sclerosis
  - Rheumatoid arthritis
  - Among others

Specialty pharmacies play an important role in patient care. They provide:

- **24/7 access to specially trained pharmacists and clinicians**
- **Physician consultations to address patient side effects, adverse reactions, and non-adherence**
- **Patient care management services to ensure patient safety**
- **Data analytics that drive better patient outcomes**

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\(^1\) sPCMA, *The Management of Specialty Drugs* (2016).
Specialty drug benefit design and management

PBM have developed key strategies to maintain access to high-quality care while ensuring that money spent on specialty drugs is not wasted:

- Negotiating rebates from drug manufacturers
- Creating high-quality preferred networks
- Offering more affordable pharmacy channels, such as home delivery and specialty pharmacies
- Optimizing appropriate sites of care
- Encouraging use of the highest-value drug options
- Reducing waste and improving adherence

Effective management is needed

In 2021, **8 of 10** top selling drugs in America were specialty drugs.²

In 2021, **specialty drugs accounted for only 3% of drug volume, but 55% of total net drug spending.³**

Compared to traditional retail drugstores, specialty pharmacies offer deeper discounts and enhanced services to employers and consumers. Specialty pharmacies and PBMs will save an estimated **$545 billion** over the 10-year period 2023–2032.⁴

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² IMAK, America’s Top Selling Drugs.
⁴ Vissanate, Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs): Generating Savings for Plan Sponsors and Consumers. (January 2023).