



December 29, 2007

BlueCross BlueShield of Minnesota  
Consumer Service Center  
Route P3-2  
P.O. Box 64560  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55164

Roche Diagnostics  
9115 Hague Road  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46256

Cc: Attorney General Lori Swanson  
Senator Amy Klobuchar  
Representative David Bly  
Representative Patty Fritz  
Senator Linda Berglin  
Senator John Marty  
Ann Meyer-Ruppel, P.A.  
LifeScan, Inc.

To BlueCross BlueShield of Minnesota and Roche Diagnostics:

I am writing to complain of the refusal by BlueCross to refill my prescription of test strips for my One Touch Ultra blood glucose monitor. Instead of simply refilling my test strips, I was required by BlueCross to purchase a completely different monitor, lancets, and test strips approved by BlueCross.

Here are the details: I have been diagnosed as diabetic for two and a half years, and have used the One Touch Ultra system to test my blood for these two and a half years. When I recently called to have my prescription of test strips refilled, I was told by my pharmacist that I had to buy a completely new monitoring system, because BlueCross would only approve this new system—Roche Diagnostics Accu-Chek system—and not my old system—One Touch Ultra.

I am outraged by this situation. The new system is not easier to use. I have a completely useable old system. It is a waste of resources for me to discard my old system and start using a new system.

To add insult to injury, the new Accu-Chek system is, pardon my French, a piece of crap:

1. I am arthritic. Opening the container of Accu-Chek test strips to use each time is very difficult. The top fits too tightly.
2. The lancet device does not work effectively. I set the device on #5, the highest number, and the lancet still does not pierce my skin. One morning, I had to try three times to get the sampler/lancet to pierce my skin. I now have bruises on my finger tips. I have never had this problem in the two and a half years that I used One Touch Ultra.
3. The test strip requires more blood that the One Touch strips do. So, picture this, after I have tried in vain to stab my fingers several times, and finally draw blood, I have to massage vigorously to get enough blood, only for the monitor to tell me that the sample is inadequate.
4. The monitor takes forever to record the blood/glucose level. Strictly speaking, in the span of a lifetime, it doesn't take long to get the results. But with my other monitor, the seconds counted down—only 5 seconds—and there my results were.

In short, the One Touch system is truly almost painless, and easy to use. I can only conclude that BlueCross will only approve the Accu-Chek system because it is cheaper—or they have received some sort of “incentives” from Roche.

Mostly, I am outraged that people must suffer the tyranny of big business, for-profit, insurance companies and pharmaceuticals, while these companies profit in the billions at consumers' expense.

And I am one of the lucky ones. Thousands of people, in Minnesota alone, have no insurance at all. Too many people go without health care and live in pain, and die, without the care that they need and deserve. It is a disgrace.

I call on all lawmakers and public officials to depose these health care and pharmaceutical monsters.

Specifically, I want BlueCross, at least, to cover my One Touch blood monitor system. In the meantime, I am paying out of pocket for the One Touch strips. So, not only does our family pay hundreds of dollars to BlueCross each month, which my husband's employer matches, for health coverage **that we do not get**, we are paying for my diabetic supplies from our own funds. It's a great deal for BlueCross.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area, obscuring the name and any handwritten notes.