

# A Trip to the Pharmacy

A post from Kelli-

All the time growing up, I always felt kind of nervous. Things that were just normal things that would happen would send me into a tailspin. Here's an example-Taking my car into the shop to get fixed, even if it was something small or normal would just freak me out. I would convince myself that something was going to happen while my car was in the shop and I wouldn't be able to go to the doctor or that I would be scheduled for a shift at work that I would have forgotten about and that I'd get fired. In all reality, I knew that if I really needed to go to the doctor because it was an emergency, I could call the ambulance and I already knew that I normally checked my work schedule 17 million times, so I wouldn't miss a shift that I was scheduled, however this anxiety and fear hung over me until my car was back in my possession. And then I just ended up finding something new to worry about...

When I got laid off from my job before I went back to nursing school, I applied for a large government grant on behalf of the company that I was working for. We submitted it kind of as a hail Mary, and to our surprise, it was approved. This meant that anyone who was losing their job as a result of the business closure would be able to go back to school and retrain with minimal expense. One stipulation however was that the funds had to be used within a certain time frame.

I started school and everything was going great! I was able to go to school without having to constantly worry about bills and how I was going to pay for things like gas to clinicals and such. The last class in the program that I attended is notorious for being extremely hard. The first few tests I did okay, but the stress started getting to me combined with my work schedule. By about the 4th test, I would sit down and

look at the first page of the test and if I didn't know the exact answer to each question without a doubt, I would end up convincing myself that I was going to fail the test, fail the class, flunk out of nursing school and then have to pay back the thousands of dollars I had received in tuition and other reimbursements to complete the program. It got so that I would start this whole anxiety ridden process for about a day before I even had to take a test.

Luckily, (I can say that now) my sleep machine broke after about 3 tests. I had to go in to get a new machine prescription and literally had a breakdown in the doctor's office. After some talking and a few prescriptions, I was feeling much better within a few days.

A few months later, I was doing better, but starting to pick back up on a few tendencies. I had to go back in for a recheck and mentioned this to the doctor and we did a bit of changing with my medications and added a new one in—Buspar. I stopped by the pharmacy after my appointment, and picked it up. My insurance at the time wasn't the greatest, but the cost was pretty minimal, so I didn't really think anything of it. I took one 5 mg pill twice a day and noticed a great improvement.



Fast forward a few months and I was needing to make some changes once again in order to be able to stop taking some of

the other medications I was on. We increased my dose to 7.5 mg twice a day. I didn't think much of it until I went to get my new prescription from the pharmacy. It was around \$30.00 which wasn't that bad, but my insurance had changed and I figured that it was an increased dose, so just shrugged it off. This continued for a few month with the price increasing a bit each time, but nothing to terrible.

This past week, I stopped by to pick up my prescription and all of a sudden it was \$100.00 and that was after insurance had paid \$100.00 on it. I was floored. I told them I couldn't pay that much and picked up my other prescription. I was flabbergasted to say the least. I searched around a bit on my phone looking to find a coupon to see if that would work. I knew that I needed the medication, but just figured that I would have to schedule an appointment with my ARNP to see if there were other options.

Turns out that insurance and the coupon cannot be stacked and the coupon only took off \$3.00. I asked about a generic, but that's what I already had and was cheaper than the name brand. I was pretty defeated, but remembered that the 5 mg tabs were significantly cheaper. I asked if there would be a possibility of getting 5 mg tabs and then cutting them to accommodate for the 2.5 mg portion. The tech said that she'd look into it and would have to call my provider to verify.

After about an hour wait, it turns out that they weren't able to fill my prescription for a month, but that when they were, they would be able to do so for \$15.00 per month. ARE YOU KIDDING ME!?!?! I was happy and mad all at the same time. I was happy that I wouldn't have to schedule an appointment and change meds yet again to accommodate for this, but I was kind of mad that this option wasn't ever brought up by anyone at the pharmacy. I'm well aware that they probably aren't allowed to bring it up, but I'm going to use this as a platform to educate everyone I can—If your medications are costly, ask questions!!! Try a coupon!!! Ask about taking a

different number of pills for the same dosage!! Ask about getting a larger dose pill and splitting it yourself!! When I work at the hospital, we only carry certain dosages of medications, much less than the pharmacy. People often question why they are receiving a half pill compared to their normal pill at home. One common one is Metoprolol which is a beta blocker used to control high blood pressure. We might only carry 50 mg tablets at the hospital, however the pharmacy may carry 25 mg tablets. When patients are admitted, we just split our 50 mg tablet in half, where as they are able to take a 25 mg pill at home from the pharmacy.

The moral of the story—DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS!!! Doctors prescribe medications because there is a need for them! If you aren't able to afford medications the way that the prescription is written—ASK! The worst that they can say is no!