

**SOURCE:** Daily Reporter (Milwaukee, WI)

**DATE:** 05-02-2005

**HEADLINE:** New drug program

Source Website: <http://www.dailyreporter.com/item.cfm?recid=20036964&snippet=f>

Matt Pommer

Posted May 2, 2005

Printer-Friendly Version

Matt Pommer

Wisconsin's new and unique state-private prescription drug program is attracting twice as many participants as expected. In the first 16 days, more than 3,200 signed up for **BadgerRx Gold**.

**BadgerRx Gold** builds on the buying power of the state employee health insurance program, producing lower prices on covered medications. Pharmacies provide discounts and manufacturers offer rebates. It is estimated there can be savings of 25 percent to 40 percent.

The program is aimed at helping those who are uninsured or under insured for prescription drug coverage. If you live in Wisconsin, you are eligible. There are no age requirements, and there is no screening for pre-existing health conditions.

The annual fee is \$25 (or \$20 if you sign up on-line) per person to a maximum of \$75 per family (or \$70 if the sign up is on-line.) Signup can be done by mail, phone, on-line or fax. Information can be obtained by calling 866-809-9382. The program is operated by **Navitus Health Solutions**, which holds the contract for state employee prescription drug insurance.

Tom Korpady, manager of the state employee health insurance program, said the program isn't the best for everyone. "Nope, it's not always the cheapest," he said, noting sometimes pharmacies have overstocked drugs or are selling some drugs as loss leaders.

The new Medicare drug program, which begins in 2006, will probably be more beneficial for senior citizens, Korpady adds.

But the savings under **BadgerRx Gold** "can be pretty spectacular in some drugs," once all the savings, discounts and rebates are included, he said. State government saved \$25 million for its employee health insurance in 2004, the first year the new program was in operation. It became available for private citizens on April 1 this year.

The state employee program had a team of physicians and pharmacists produce drug-therapy options. That and negotiations with pharmacists and drug companies produce the savings, according to Navitus.

The program was so successful for state workers that the health insurance cost increases for 2005 were held to 4.9 percent. For retired state employees, the health insurance costs were reduced 6 percent for 2005, thanks to the , according to Korpady.

When all is said and done, there aren't any state tax dollars for the private citizens who opt for the program. It's just the muscle of a big buyer of drugs getting a good deal.

Matt Pommer is the dean of correspondents covering the state Capitol.

**Highlights: *BadgerRx Gold, Navitus Health Solutions***