

Advocacy Insights

NON-MEDICAL SWITCHING

With Greg Hansch



Q: “Non-medical switching” is an unfamiliar term to many. How do you explain it?

The term “non-medical switching” can be confusing, but everyone knows someone with a chronic health condition. So I frame it in those terms. I explain that the goal is to protect patients’ access to medications that keep them stable, that it’s senseless to take away a treatment that’s working. People seem to understand that intuitively.

Q: What advice do you give patients about meeting with legislators on non-medical switching?

I offer three tips:

- 1. Give the movie trailer version of your story.** Don’t get bogged down in the details. Share a 30-60 second overview that conveys the issue and summarizes your personal experience.
- 2. Highlight the alternatives.** Tell policymakers how things could have worked differently to minimize the negative outcomes you or others experienced because of non-medical switching.
- 3. Make a clear ask.** Legislators need to understand concretely what you’re asking them to do.

Q: How does non-medical switching impact mental health specifically?

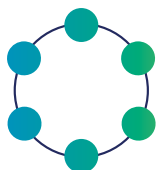
Mental health conditions can be hard to diagnose in the first place. Even after a diagnosis, it’s difficult to find the right medication. Then, when people lose access to treatment, they can wind up in the ER unnecessarily. There may be an incident that requires law enforcement to get involved. Patients may quickly decompensate and even lose their life as a result.

For people with a serious mental health condition, non-medical switching really can be a matter of life and death.

Q: What is it about the issue of non-medical switching that really resonates with people?

It impacts a fundamental human need. I think of it this way: What do all humans want to experience in their lifetime? They want to be healthy, and they want their friends and family to be healthy. People want a family, a social life, to be working on their career goals or going to school. Non-medical switching gets in the way of those natural, universal human experiences.

When advocates drive that point home, it tugs at the heart strings in a very meaningful way.



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