

Evaluation of TompkinsRx Prescription Discount Card

From January 2005 to September 2008 (almost 4 years)

Executive Summary

Since the introduction of TompkinsRx in January 2005, a total of 73,923 prescriptions have been filled using its discount, **saving residents almost a million dollars** (\$955,539). Average price savings were \$13 per prescription, ranging from 22 percent to almost 25 percent each year. Average monthly utilizers have increased from 667 in 2005 to 784 in 2008. From the utilization statistics and comments by area pharmacies, it is clear that TompkinsRx has served its county through consistent monetary savings for its residents.

Year	Average Utilizers/ Month	Total Utilizer/ Year	Total Rxs	Total Tompkins Drug Cost	Total Price Savings	Avg. Price Savings	% Price Savings
2005	667	7,345	16,062	\$712,993	\$215,658	\$13.43	23.0%
2006	761	9,131	20,647	878,494	\$244,749	\$11.85	21.7%
2007	765	9,174	21,211	948,964	\$264,019	\$12.45	21.8%
2008 (9 mos)	784	7,068	16,003	699,686	\$231,113	\$14.44	24.8%
TOTAL		32,718	73,923	3,240,137	\$955,539	\$12.97	22.8%

The recent proliferation of free discount cards across the nation and the desire to obtain feedback from area pharmacies led the Health Planning Council to conduct an evaluation of TompkinsRx. The main questions we wanted to answer and our summary conclusions are presented below.

Program Evaluation Questions	Summary of Conclusions
1. Do pharmacies give out the TompkinsRx card to customers who do not have prescription insurance?	YES!! Select remarks by pharmacies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Absolutely.” • “Great service to customers.” • “Very helpful for those without insurance. For some drugs, it’s a significant discount.” • “Most without insurance are grateful.” • “Many don’t know it exists until we provide it.”
2. Do other discount cards offer deeper discounts than TompkinsRx?	NO. Most discount cards offer <i>similar average</i> savings.
3. Are other counties in New York State offering a prescription discount card and who are the card administrators?	YES. About half the counties offer one. Caremark was the card administrator in 15 counties, followed by ProAct (10), and LibertyCareRx (6).
4. Should we be generally recommending a different card for use in Tompkins?	NO, not at this time. We should continue to monitor Rx card trends in NYS and sustain outreach activities for TompkinsRx.

I. Introduction of TompkinsRx

At the time a discount card was being considered by the Tompkins County Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee, only a few counties in New York State were offering this option. County representatives learned about Nassau County's experience with a free discount card administered by AdvanceRx (now Caremark) which was launched several months earlier. It also considered cards used in other counties including Broome and Westchester. Many of the early generation discount cards required submission of an enrollment form and an annual fee.

Caremark was the administrator ultimately selected by the County since its discount card was free to taxpayers, available to all residents regardless of age and income, and did not require an enrollment form or yearly fee. Often the requirement to enroll leads to fewer people taking advantage of a discount card even if there is no cost to sign up. Caremark provides the County with tear-off TompkinsRx cards and monthly utilization reports. Its provision of monthly reports enables the County to monitor usage and savings for residents. Individual consumer information is not collected, therefore privacy is maintained.

Summary data for almost four years (from 2005 to September 2008) are shown the Appendix A. The number of prescriptions processed using TompkinsRx has increased each year, resulting in a total of 73,923 from 2005 through September 2008.

II. Publicity / Outreach

The favorable reception of TompkinsRx by local retail pharmacies and the steady increase in the number of average monthly utilizers over the last four years, may be due to early aggressive marketing efforts. Nassau County's experience taught us that getting people to use the card was a matter of putting it in their hands. The 2005 launch included the insertion of 35,000 cards into the January 26 edition of the Pennysaver. Prior to the mass distribution, the County introduced the card to the public through a news release describing TompkinsRx and its benefit to people without prescription insurance. It also maintained information about how to use the card on the Tompkins County website, and throughout the year, submitted news releases and advertisements to the Ithaca Journal and community papers. The advertisements were funded throughout the first year through a small private grant obtained by the HPC. Before the card was placed into use, the HPC staff met with each of the retail pharmacies to introduce them to the card, answer any questions, and provide them with an initial supply. (Note: since 2005, there have been pharmacy ownership changes and mergers. TompkinsRx continues to remain available in all pharmacies.)

In the first year of implementation, over 52,000 cards were distributed to pharmacies, public locations, public representatives, agencies, medical offices, and others. A second shipment of 20,000 cards was delivered to the County for distribution in 2006.

About once a quarter, the Health Planning Council proactively calls the pharmacies to ask if they need more cards. Additionally we distribute cards to all people who call 2-1-1 with questions about prescription affordability and those who have used Urgent Rx, a program helping the uninsured who visit the Cayuga Medical Center emergency department, convenient care center, or Ithaca Free Clinic. Several human services agencies maintain a supply for their clients.

The marketing efforts have paid off as pharmacies call the Health Planning Council on a regular basis to replenish their supplies and agency interactions with individuals reveal that many consumers have used the card for prescription drug purchases.

III. Evaluation of TompkinsRx

In addition to internet research of prescription discount cards in NYS counties, we conducted a phone survey of all fifteen (15) retail pharmacies in Tompkins County during August 2008. The survey contained six questions whose purpose was to find out if pharmacies gave the TompkinsRx card to customers without insurance and if other cards consistently provided deeper discounts. In addition, we were interested in pharmacists' perceptions of its helpfulness and general ease in processing the card. We finished the survey by asking if they needed more cards and had any comments to share. The questions posed included:

1. Do you give out the TompkinsRx prescription discount card when customers don't have insurance?
2. Do your customers ever request a card (TompkinsRx)?
3. How helpful do you think this card is for your customers?
4. Are there other prescription discount cards that your customers use which may provide greater savings?
5. (if yes) What are the names of these cards?
6. How difficult is it for pharmacists to process TompkinsRx cards?

Responses came from a variety of pharmacy staff, from pharmacy assistants to supervising managers. All pharmacies, but one, were very familiar with the card and positive about its benefits to customers. Appendix B summarizes the responses from pharmacies. (The identity of individual pharmacies has not been revealed).

The findings from our evaluation follow.

1. Do pharmacies give out the TompkinsRx card to customers with no prescription insurance?

The HPC survey found that out of 15 surveyed, **all** believed that TompkinsRx was helpful and found no problems in its processing. Almost all of the pharmacies (14) provided the card on a regular basis to its customers who had no prescription insurance. Every pharmacy representative indicated the TompkinsRx card was a useful service to County residents.

Overall, the phone survey showed that Tompkins County pharmacies have been instrumental in providing the TompkinsRx prescription discount cards to people who may benefit. Pharmacy respondents were very pleased with its availability and felt it was helpful. One commented that customers were happy to save even when the discount was small in amount. All reported no problems in processing the discount for customers. The general comments from the phone survey confirmed the monthly reports from Caremark that the card is being used consistently- from an average of 667 uses a month in 2005 to 784 average uses per month for the first 9 months of 2008.

One of the advantages to selecting Caremark has been the availability of the card for immediate use. Supplying the pharmacies with cards on a regular basis ensures it is available at the point of purchase. One pharmacy keeps a card taped to its register in case it runs out of cards. They will use the card number to process discounts for uninsured customers. From the usage reports, it is difficult to determine how many individuals have used the card at least once since the number of utilizers is not the same as the number of unduplicated individuals. Family members may use the same card when filling their prescriptions.

2. **Do other discount cards offer deeper discounts than TompkinsRx?**

The HPC has received a number of inquiries from area agencies and County representatives about the legitimacy and validity of free prescription discount cards being marketed to them and their target clients. Their target organizations are those which work with potential card users, such as the uninsured. Many of these card programs claim to offer the “highest” savings and because the companies use nationally known associations to promote the cards, agencies are unclear if they offer better savings than TompkinsRx. Advertisements and introductory letters from these card administrators claim savings of up to 75%. These companies typically rely on not-for-profit agencies for the distribution of their card.

HPC has reviewed the websites and claims of each of these card programs and has not found significant differences among programs. Complicating a side-by-side analysis of cards, is the fact that prescription drug prices can vary weekly and by pharmacy.

Several of the area pharmacists confirmed that while the discounts may vary based on a particular prescription drug, the average savings is roughly similar. Twelve out of 15 pharmacies did not believe there was a free card that offered a better discount most of the time. Of the three who reported that other cards offered a better discount, one named NY Rx, another cited a card whose name was unconfirmed, and the third cited manufacturer sponsored cards for select drugs.

It should be noted that the discount cards offered by pharmaceutical manufacturers differ from the discount cards being promoted by card sponsors. Cards offered by associations of pharmaceutical manufacturers, such as Together Rx Access, cover a limited list of brand name drugs, have income eligibility requirements, and cannot be provided to people with Medicare. To obtain a Together Rx Access card, one must enroll via email, online or phone. Another example of a manufacturer sponsored discount card is available through Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. The Pfizer Pfriends card discounts about 90 Pfizer medicines by an average of 32 percent off retail and is only available to those with incomes below 300 percent of the federal poverty level. As part of the Prescription Meds Access Program, HPC staff will recommend pharmaceutical manufacturer discount cards as an option for people with who may not qualify for patient assistance programs and require a certain brand of medicine.

One company, United Networks of America, a for-profit company, sponsors the *New York Rx* prescription discount card through its not-for-profit arm, FreeDrugCard.us. This card is available online and can be downloaded and printed by individuals for immediate use by visiting the website (www.newyorkrxcard.com). Among the value-added benefits of this card according to Francesco Ciccone, the president of the United Networks of America, is access to other free programs which it owns and operates, such as *25dollareyeglasses.net*. Although the *New York Rx* card suggests endorsement by NYS, it should be noted that a disclaimer on their website specifically states that, “This program is not a government- sponsored program.” The *New York Rx* prescription discount card is presently being distributed in Tompkins through some human services agencies. News releases about the card claim savings of up to 75% with typical savings around 30%.

This information is being brought up only to draw attention to the fact that prescription discount card sponsors are private businesses held by for-profit entities in some cases. The fact that a card has a regional name, such as New York Rx, is primarily for marketing purposes.

3. **Are other counties in New York State offering a prescription discount card?**

At the time a discount card was being considered by the Legislator’s Health and Human Services Committee, only a few counties in New York State were offering this option. Now, almost half of

the counties in the State either endorse a free card for its residents or mention having plans to introduce a card within a year. (Appendix C)

Our summer interns, through internet research and phone calls to county offices, compiled a list of prescription discount cards being promoted in NYS counties. Caremark appears to be the sponsor of discount cards offered in the most counties (15), followed by ProAct (10), and LibertyCareRx (6). It was not always clear whether the card was endorsed by the county whose name appeared.

ProAct, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kinney Drugs, has been actively introducing its prescription discount card to counties in Central New York and the North Country. According to ProAct's website, the discount card has been endorsed by the NYS Association of Counties. The ProAct card is similar to others as it is available for immediate use and is widely accepted by area pharmacies. It was not a known card sponsor at the time the Tompkins County Health and Human Services Committee considered discount cards.

4. Should we be generally recommending some other card in our community?

Given the data reports and conversations with area pharmacies, TompkinsRx remains an important way to help consumers save. We see no reasons to consider a new card at this time. In general it is not likely to lead to a substantial increase in savings. Also, the pharmacists are familiar with TompkinsRx and being very proactive in routinely offering this card to people without prescription insurance. Having too many other cards could be confusing and lead to less use overall.

One area that could be improved is increasing awareness of the discount card. Most pharmacies report that only occasionally do customers visit the pharmacy requesting TompkinsRx. Those that do are familiar with the card through previous experience. While Tompkins County is very fortunate to have pharmacies that want to help its uninsured and under-insured customers by presenting a card at the point of purchase, it is difficult to estimate the number of potential customers who don't visit the pharmacy and fill a prescription because of the perception it is unaffordable.

Marketing of TompkinsRx must be sustained because people's prescription coverage status and individual prescription needs tend to change over time. Working with the Tompkins County public information staff and through the Human Services Coalition, the HPC will continue steps to educate Tompkins County about TompkinsRx and identifying new venues for making the card available.

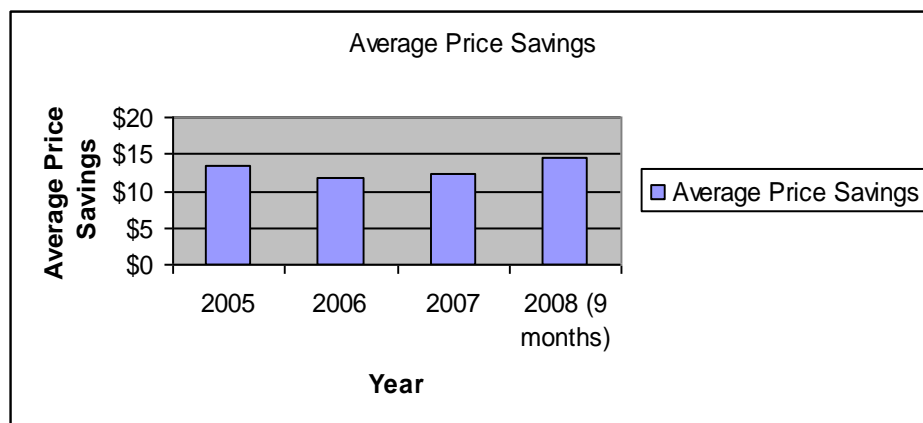
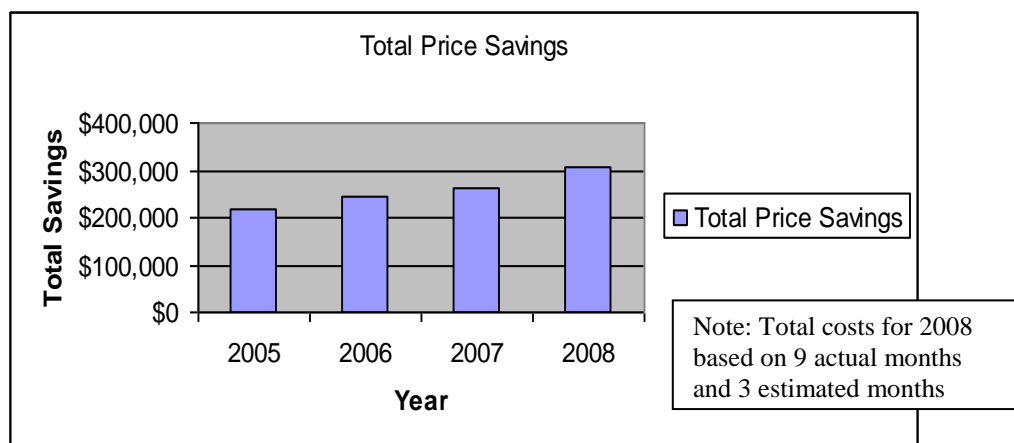
IV. Future Trends and Needs

For many of the uninsured residents of Tompkins County, the HPC's Prescription Meds Access Program (PMAP) can help with longer term prescription needs. This program works with individuals to find patient assistance programs that provide free branded medicine. Usually these medicines are for chronic conditions and do not help for people with urgent or short term need. Patient assistance programs are considered programs of last resort so individuals must apply to State public assistance programs first. Since the patient assistance application requires completion by the prescribing physician, financial documentation, and other information, pursuing this option takes anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks. For many, this is the only reasonable option, as prescription medicine purchased with a discount card is still unaffordable. Still, TompkinsRx helps many who require a short term supply of medicine in response to an urgent condition.

The New York State Department of Health indicated the possibility of introducing a discount card in 2009 aimed to help people between 50 and 64. Early press releases reported that these discount cards would be available to those with certain income levels and only through application. At the time of this evaluation, the program was not yet operational. We will continue to monitor card trends and news to be sure that residents will have a range of options available.

Appendix A Summary of TompkinsRx Utilization Data

TompkinsRx Summary Data								
Year	Total Rxs	Total Drug Cost	Avg. Rx Cost	Retail Price	Avg. Retail Price	Total Price Savings	Avg. Price Savings	% Price Savings
2005	16,062	\$712,993	\$44.39	\$928,637	\$57.82	\$215,658	\$13.43	23.0%
2006	20,647	878,494	\$42.55	\$1,126,242	\$54.55	\$244,749	\$11.85	21.7%
2007	21,211	948,964	\$44.74	\$1,212,982	\$57.19	\$264,019	\$12.45	21.8%
2008 (9 mos)	16,003	699,686	\$43.72	\$930,799	\$58.16	\$231,113	\$14.44	24.8%
Total	73,923	3,240,137	\$43.83	\$4,198,660	\$56.80	\$955,539	\$12.97	22.8%



Appendix B: Responses to Survey of Area Pharmacies Regarding TompkinsRx – August 2008

Summary of Responses

Question	Summary of Results
Do you give out the TompkinsRx prescription discount card when customers don't have insurance?	14/15 replied yes (one was unsure)
Do your customers ever request a card (TompkinsRx)?	14/15 responses ranged from occasionally to yes.
How helpful do you think this card is for your customers?	15/15 noted the card was helpful; sample: Absolutely Very helpful for those without insurance. For some drugs, it's a significant discount Great service to customers Most w/o insurance are grateful. Many don't know it exists until we provide it.
Are there other prescription discount cards that your customers use which may provide greater savings?	12/15 responded there were no other (free) cards giving better discounts. 3/15 thought that there might be other cards (such as through pharmaceutical manufacturers) which would be better on occasion.
What are the names of these cards?	Two mentioned, "New York Rx", but one felt it did not provide a better discount and the other was unsure. One mentioned "Corner Rx" card as being sent to consumers in the mail and having better discounts. In conversation, several pharmacists referred to specific drug promotions sponsored by drug manufacturers on occasion which would result in better prices once in a while
How difficult is it for pharmacists to process TompkinsRx cards?	15/15 replied there were no difficulties in processing

Responses to Phone Survey of Area Pharmacies
(conducted August 2008)

Pharmacy	Give out Tompkins Rx Card to customers w/o insurance	Do customers request cards?	How helpful do you think this card is?	Are there other Rx discount cards that may provide greater savings?	If “yes” what are the names of these cards?	How difficult is it for pharmacists to process Tompkins Rx Cards
#1	Yes	Yes	Very helpful for those without insurance. For some drugs, it’s a significant discount	There are other cards. In general TompkinsRx is best and drugs are cheapest with it.	N/A	Not at all, very easy.
#2	Yes	Several come in requesting them.	Very helpful. Great service to customers	No, this is the main one they use.	N/A	Not difficult.
#3	Yes	Not usually, only if they know about it and have used it before	Pretty helpful, even if it saves only a little bit. One issue is that it doesn’t offer discount for birth control pills	None known of	N/A	Not at all
#4	Constantly	Most don’t ask since they don’t know it exists.	Absolutely	About a zillion discount cards are available.	Most are comparable. The only way to conduct a comparison is by drug.	Not hard to process. Happy to help consumer and do this as a service.
#5	Yes, we offer card to those without insurance.	A few ask for it by name. Some think they have to sign up	Yes for those without insurance, or whose insurance doesn’t cover a prescription	Not really. Have seen the NY Rx Card but TompkinsRx gives the best discounts. Will sometimes check between several cards for customers	See previous answer.	No problem at all. It’s working well.

Pharmacy	Give out Tompkins Rx Card to customers w/o insurance	Do customers request cards?	How helpful do you think this card is?	Are there other Rx discount cards that may provide greater savings?	If “yes” what are the names of these cards?	How difficult is it for pharmacists to process Tompkins Rx Cards
#6	We think so.	Usually customers already have a card	Yes- very helpful	None she can think of quickly	N/A	All info on card. Very easy to process. If not abused, it's fine.
#7	Yes. Keeps one taped by register for the # in case they run out.	Sometimes.	It's great.	No. Sees other cards once in awhile. Others are not as good.	Don't know.	Piece of cake.
#8	Yes.	Once in a great while.	Very helpful.	None that are free.	No, can't remember.	Not at all.
#9	Yes	Some people do.	Quite helpful. Most w/o insurance are grateful. Many don't know it exists until we provide it.	Possibly NY Rx card. A customer was signed up by her daughter.	NY Rx Card	Not at all.
#10	Yes.	Yes	Only if you don't have insurance.	No. Most customers have insurance	N/A	Not at all.
#11	Yes	Yes	In most cases	None she can think of	N/A	Not at all
#12	Yes, we give them out a lot.	Some people will ask for this.	Thinks this is helpful.	Not really.	Some pharmacies have free drug programs	Not at all difficult to process/ use.
#13	Yes	Occasionally	Pretty helpful	Greater discounts are possible with manufacturer/ brand specific cards/ promos	Depends upon the drug	Not difficult to process at all
#14	Yes	Yes	It's good	Yes- one that people are getting through the mail	Corner (?) Rx Card	Not hard at all
#15	We do.	Some people request it on occasion.	Very helpful	Not that he knows of.	N/A	Very easy, handy to have.

Appendix C: Prescription Discount Cards Offered in New York State by County
 (Chart prepared by Allison Siderko and Kylie Miller, HPC interns – August 2008)

County	Rx Discount Card Name	Sponsor
Albany	-	-
Allegany	Discount Prescription Drug Card	Caremark
Broome	BroomeRx	LibertyCareRx
Cattaraugus	-	-
Cayuga	Prescription Drug Discount Card	ProAct
Chautauqua	The Chautauqua County Prescription Drug Discount Card	Caremark
Chemung	ChemungRx	LibertyCareRx
Chenango	-	-
Clinton	-	-
Columbia	-	-
Cortland	-	-
Delaware	Pending	Pending
Dutchess	The Dutchess County Prescription Discount Drug Card	Caremark
Erie	-	-
Essex	-	Caremark
Franklin	Franklin County Prescription Drug Discount Card	ProAct
Fulton	Fulton County Prescription Discount Card	ProAct
Genesee	Lake Plains Community Care Network Prescription Discount Card	Caremark
Greene	-	-
Hamilton	Hamilton County NY Prescription Discount Card	Caremark
Herkimer	Prescription Drug Discount Card	Scrip Solutions
Jefferson	Jefferson County Prescription Drugs Discount Card	ProAct
Lewis	Lewis County Prescription Drugs Discount Card	ProAct
Madison	Prescription Discount Card	ProAct
Monroe	Monroe County Prescription Discount Plan	Rx Choice
Nassau	NassauRx	AdvancePCS (now Caremark)
New York City	-	-
Niagara	NiagaraRx	LibertyCareRx
Oneida	The Oneida County Discount Drug Program	MedImpact Healthcare Systems
Onondaga	Prescription Discount Card	ProAct
Ontario	?	Caremark
Orange	-	-

Orleans	Lake Plains Community Care Network Prescription Discount Card	Caremark
Oswego	Prescription Discount Card	ProAct
Otsego	Pending	Pending
Putnum	Uses Westchester County's Program	-
Rensselaer	-	-
Rockland	Rockland County Prescription Discount Card	Caremark Rx Inc.
St. Lawrence	Medical and Prescription Drug Discount Card	ProAct
Saratoga	-	-
Schenectady	-	-
Schoharie	-	-
Schuyler	-	-
Seneca	Seneca County Prescription Discount Card	ProAct
Steuben	SteubenRx	Caremark Rx Inc./ProAct
Suffolk	-	-
Sullivan	Rx Discount Program	Advantage Wellness of America
Tioga	TiogaRx	LibertyCareRx
Tompkins	TompkinsRx	Caremark
Ulster	UlsterRx	LibertyCareRx
Warren	-	-
Washington	-	-
Wayne	WayneRx	Caremark
Westchester	WestchesterRx	LibertyCareRx
Wyoming	Lake Plains Community Care Network Prescription Discount Card	Caremark
Yates	Rx Savings Plus	Caremark