National Prescription Audit (NPA) — Product Definition

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1. Product overview

Product name: National Prescription Audit (NPA) family of services

Description: The standard NPA offering provides a U.S.-based national view of estimated dispensed prescription volume for all markets across three channels: Retail, Mail, and Long-Term Care (LTC). The offering is available on a weekly and monthly basis, with the ability to aggregate results to quarterly, annual, or year-to-date (YTD) timeframes. Additional options include patient age, gender, copay range, method of payment, and source of business (SoB) metrics. SoB metrics are available only for retail and mail channels.

Target audience: Pharmaceutical manufacturers, financial community, advertising agencies, universities, consultants, and suppliers.

2. Methodology

Design purpose

NPA is designed to generalize dispensed prescription activity from a representative sample of pharmacies to a national view across retail, mail, and long-term care channels in the United States. The methodology applies projection techniques to estimate total prescription volume in a consistent and stable manner across channels. Its design philosophy aligns estimated prescription demand with the amount of pharmaceutical product sold into pharmacies, using both dispensed prescription activity and sell-in data to produce logically consistent estimates of market activity.

Sample and universe

- Sample prescriptions from retail, mail, and LTC pharmacies projected to a universe of estimated prescriptions. A prescription is defined as a licensed healthcare provider's written order to a pharmacist for a specific medication, detailing the drug, strength, quantity, and instructions for a patient to receive. Only prescriptions that are sold to the patient are included in NPA. Prescriptions that are filled but not picked up by the patient, such as voided, reversed, or abandoned prescriptions, may be reported; adjustments are applied within the projection methodology to account for these transactions.
- The universe of pharmacies is defined by IQVIA through research and classification of pharmacies (name, address, account type, ZIP verification, directories, phone sourcing, licensing, prescription volume, product mix).
- The projection methodology measures the number of prescriptions sold to patients.

Projection methodology

- IQVIA uses and publishes a single projection methodology to produce estimates.
- Each of the three reporting dispensing channels (retail, mail and long-term care) are projected separately and uniquely.
- Retail and LTC projections use ratios between sales dollars obtained from DDD and dispensed prescriptions, adjusted geo-spatially for non-reporting pharmacies.
- Mail projections differ due to contractual relationships; sizing uses DDD dollars for stability.
- Adjustments are made that account for blocked data in the mail channel and limited distribution products in the retail and LTC channels.

3. Production

Production cycle

Standard NPA is available weekly and monthly. A week is defined as dispensing occurring from Saturday to Friday; months are calendar months. Weekly processing includes:

- Data Acquisition (Saturday)
- Reformatting (Saturday-Sunday)
- Trending Analysis and QA (Monday-Wednesday)
- Data Integration and Processing (Thursday-Friday)
- Client View Validation (Friday-Monday)
- Monthly follows the same steps with additional validation before publication

Dependencies

Dependent on sample data reported by Retail, Mail, and LTC pharmacies and timely, complete reporting of data submissions. Projections are based on Drug Distribution Data (DDD).

Cycle times

Suppliers may provide data daily or weekly. Trailing data (late submissions) are normal and adjusted within the projection methodology.

Data requirements

NPA provides 72 months and 106 weeks of data as standard; additional history back to 1992 available via SMART Launch or custom deliverables.

Contingency plans

Imputations are used to estimate for expected prescriptions that may be unavailable for a given production cycle. Imputation methodology is used if a supplier does not report or data quality concerns arise. Imputation uses prior dispensing patterns adjusted for trends. Short-term imputations are not ordinarily communicated; long-term imputations (13+ weeks) may be communicated via IQVIA standard communication approaches.

4. Challenges and limitations

- NPA is sample-based and requires a projection methodology to estimate the metric population; therefore, sampling error exists. Estimates should be used with Confidence Intervals (CI).
- Products with an invalid or unavailable National Drug Code (NDC) at the time of production are not included in reporting.
- "Free goods" are not included in projection estimates. "Free goods" are defined as prescriptions that have the attributes of an indigent prescription, prescriptions dispensed at no cost as part of programs designed to support economically disadvantaged patients.
- Data restrictions can occur when pharmacies or suppliers withhold prescription, sales, or patient info. IQVIA cannot influence contractual restrictions.
- Blocked products are not accounted for; blocked plan volume adjusted via factors.
- Coverage: Retail ~94%, Mail ~67%, LTC ~76%[1] (as of 2024; date-stamped for version control). Coverage measured as sampled prescriptions /universe prescriptions.
- Geographic limitations: Puerto Rico excluded; prescriptions dispensed in U.S. pharmacies captured.

5. Technology and service

Delivery platforms

Standard delivery via SMART Business Intelligence (SMART BI) tool; relational files (Relational Data Model (RDM)) and flat files available at additional cost

Enabling features

SMART supports dashboards, Excel/PPT exports, saved reports, and automated delivery

[1]Coverage is measured as sampled prescriptions divided by estimated universe prescriptions.

6. Commercial

Product offering packages

- Full monthly or weekly subscription
- Partial subscriptions (quarterly/semiannual/ limited markets)
- Ad hoc options

Pricing

Based on client segment and subscription type; discounts for reduced frequency; add-ons for Extended Insights and New to Brand

Integration

NPA integrates with National Sales Perspective (NSP) for supply-demand analysis and National Medical and Treatment Audit (NMTA) for diagnosis-based insights.

7. Data sources and collection

Sources

- Standard: Retail, mail, LTC pharmacies; software vendors
- For NPA: New To Brand (NTB): Patient data switch houses for Source of Business (SoB) metrics

Frequency

Daily and weekly collection; trailing prescriptions adjusted via factors

Sampling framework

Prescriptions standardized via IQVIA reference files and projected using factors

Pharmacy Universe

Updated monthly; cross-channel reclassifications applied quarterly (Jan/Apr/Jul/Oct) to limit trend breaks

8. Data specifications

Standard data elements

DATA ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Product/ Form/ Strength	Identifies the pharmaceutical product dispensed, including dosage form and strength as reported in prescription transactions.
Product Classification (ATC/USC)	Products are classified using the Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical (ATC) classification and IQVIA's Universal System of Classification (USC) to support therapeutic grouping and analysis.
Market Groupings (Major/Minor)	IQVIA-defined market groupings used to organize products for reporting and analysis purposes.
National Drug Code (NDC)	FDA-administered identifier used to uniquely identify drug products reported in prescription transactions.
Channel	Dispensing channel through which the prescription was sold (Retail, Mail, or Long-Term Care).
Manufacturer	Identifies the pharmaceutical manufacturer associated with the product.
New Prescriptions (NRx)	Count of new prescriptions sold to patients during the reporting period.
Total Prescriptions (TRx)	Count of total prescriptions sold to patients, including new and refill prescriptions, during the reporting period.
Extended Units (e.g., pills, mLs)	Represents the number of packages or units sold for a product.
Daily Average Consumption (DACON)	Measure indicating how physicians, on average, prescribe a given form and strength of a product, derived from prescription data.
Brand/ Generic Indicator	Identifies whether a product is a branded or generic formulation.
Acute / Chronic Indicator	Classification indicating whether a product is primarily used for acute or chronic treatment.

Additional elements

Age, gender, co-pay, method of payment, SoB metrics

Update frequency

Weekly and monthly

9. Metrics and measures

Standard metrics

New Prescriptions (NRx), Total Prescriptions (TRx), Units, **Daily Average Consumption (DACON)**; Extended Insights adds demographics and payment details; New to Brand adds SoB metrics.

Delivery attributes

Weekly (106 weeks history), Monthly (72 months history); delivery 10–18 days post-processing.

10. Reference information

NPA leverages IQVIA proprietary reference databases to standardize, classify, and enrich dispensed prescription data, including:

Prescriber universe

Derived from OneKey. A subset of healthcare professionals with prescription-writing authority. Prescriber specialties are used in specialty groupings reported in NPA.

Outlet database

Defines the attributes of pharmacies and non-retail outlets, including business type, channel classification, status, and location. Retail, mail service, and long-term care outlets included in NPA are classified using subcategory codes maintained within this database.

Product database

Links reported National Drug Codes (NDCs) to proprietary product reference identifiers and assigns products to therapy areas using IQVIA's Universal System of Classification (USC)

Plan universe

Maps third-party plan codes, BINs, and group/Processor Control Numbers

Processor Control Numbers (PCN)

Plan, Payer, and PBM reference and reporting support method of payment and copay range reporting in NPA Extended Insights.

Patient database

Enables longitudinal linkage of sold prescriptions at the patient level to support continuity of reporting and calculation of source of business metrics, including new therapy starts, switches, and continuing therapy.

11. Handling data issues

Quality Controls (QC)

Prior to inclusion in NPA, prescription data undergoes more than 230 quality control edits applied at the supplier, pharmacy (store), and transaction levels. These edits are designed to validate data completeness, internal consistency, and logical trends. A dedicated Data Quality Assurance analyst monitors variances against historical patterns, researches exceptions, and escalates issues as needed. Missing or anomalous data is identified promptly and addressed through established investigation and correction processes.

Adjustment and estimation techniques

ADJUSTMENT/ TECHNIQUE	DEFINITION	WHERE APPLIED
Voids and Reversal Factor	Accounts for de duplication of multiple transactions reported for the same dispensed prescription. IQVIA primarily utilizes sold date; when sold date is not available, this factor adjusts for voided or reversed transactions to avoid overstating prescription volume.	Retail channel
Trailing Data Factor	Accounts for prescriptions reported to IQVIA after the production cycle has closed by applying historic trailing patterns to stabilize weekly and monthly trends.	Retail, Mail, and Long-Term Care channels
Limited Distribution Methodology	Leverages product-specific sizing from existing methodology to estimate additional volume for products distributed through a limited set of pharmacies. This estimated volume supplements projected prescription activity for non sample pharmacies.	Retail and Long-Term Care channels
Blocked Data Factor	Uses high-level information reported by suppliers to create adjustment factors that account for blocked plan volume when prescription level data is restricted. Blocked data factors adjust estimates without exposing restricted data.	Mail channel
Imputation	Estimates prescription volume for periods of non-reporting using the pharmacy's historical dispensing pattern as a baseline, adjusted for observed market trends in surrounding pharmacies.	Retail, Mail, and Long-Term Care channels

12. Summary of features

- Representative sample across retail, mail, LTC channels
- Projections based on actual sell-in data
- Integration with IQVIA offerings
- Proprietary patient encryption for longitudinal insights

13. FAQ

Does NPA capture prescriptions paid under a medical benefit?
In some instances, prescriptions paid under a medical benefit may be included if they are reported through pharmacy dispensing systems; however, NPA is primarily designed to capture prescriptions processed through pharmacy benefit workflows.

How are compounded prescriptions handled in NPA?
Compounded prescriptions may be included depending on how the pharmacy reports the transaction. Variability in reporting practices can result in inconsistent identification of compounded prescriptions.

How does IQVIA project prescription volume for newly launched products?
Newly launched products are included as soon as sufficient sample data becomes available. Projection factors are applied in line with standard NPA methodology to generalize early prescription activity.

Are voided or reversed prescriptions included in NPA metrics?
No. Prescriptions that are voided, reversed, or not dispensed to the patient are either excluded from reporting or adjusted within the projection methodology.

14. Glossary

New Prescriptions (NRx)
Count of new prescriptions sold to patients during the reporting period.

Total Prescriptions (TRx)
Count of all prescriptions sold, including new and refill prescriptions, during the reporting period.

Universal System of Classification (USC)
IQVIA-maintained therapeutic classification system used to group pharmaceutical products.

Source of Business (SoB)
Metrics that categorize prescription activity based on patient treatment status, such as new therapy starts, switches, or continuing therapy.

15. Data investigations and governance

NPA follows established governance and support processes for managing data quality and client inquiries, including:

- Escalation of identified data issues through IQVIA's Data Quality Assurance and Product Management teams
- Investigation and resolution of anomalies in line with standard quality control and validation procedures
- Use of documented service-level expectations for response and resolution timelines
- Communication of material or prolonged data situations through established IQVIA client communication channels

Details may be supplemented based on customer-specific service agreements.

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