

Private Payer Advocacy

March 2008

1. AAP objects to UnitedHealthcare (UHC) home apnea monitoring policy
2. Ohio Chapter pediatric council advocates for immunization administration payments by Medical Mutual of Ohio
3. UHC to increase payments for Merck vaccines; Revises Rapid Influenza Testing Policy
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AAP gets national carrier's attention on pediatric issues

<http://aapnews.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/29/3/13>

Good health, good business: The first national effort to recommend a model benefits plan for business promotes maternal and child health, with recommendations from Bright Futures

<http://aapnews.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/29/3/33>

Continued monitoring of carrier mergers advised to protect patients and pediatricians

<http://aapnews.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/29/3/36>

1. AAP objects to UnitedHealthcare (UHC) home apnea monitoring policy

The AAP sent a letter to UHC objecting to the carrier's coverage policy for home apnea monitoring for infants and its provisions for terminating monitoring. The letter clarifies the AAP recommendations and urges the carrier to adhere to the policy statement *Apnea, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and Home Monitoring*. The AAP **letter to UHC on apnea monitoring** is attached and is posted on the AAP Member Center, private payer advocacy page.

2. Ohio Chapter pediatric council advocates for immunization administration payments by Medical Mutual

The Ohio Chapter pediatric council reports that Medical Mutual will later this year begin to pay physicians a vaccine administration fee. The new policy will allow practices to develop coherent charges for vaccines and eliminate a major payer's variance from CPT coding. The AAP had sent letters to the carrier and

the chapter pediatric council followed up with meetings with Medical Mutual objecting to its non-payment for immunization administration.

3. UHC to increase payments for Merck vaccines

In response to the Academy's letter to payers calling for adjustments to fee schedules in light of Merck's price increase for vaccines, UHC announced that it will increase payments for the affected vaccines. The UHC pay increase will be effective April 1, 2008 and the AAP plans to follow up with UHC for a more timely implementation. The Merck price increase became effective February 1, 2008 and physicians had a 30-day window to purchase the vaccines at the previous price. Attached below is **UHC's response on vaccine issues**, which outlines its vaccine payment methodology.

UHC Revises Rapid Influenza Testing Policy

UHC announced that it has changed its rapid influenza testing policy and it is now a covered benefit subject to member eligibility, federal or state regulatory requirements and the specific health plan selected by the family/employer. The AAP had advocated for a change in UHC's position, which had considered the rapid influenza test as a non-covered benefit. A copy of the **UHC policy on rapid tests for influenza** is attached below.

4. AAP joins other specialty societies in promoting e-prescribing

The AAP and other medical societies launched an online site for physicians to follow a step-by-step process to assist in transitioning to electronic prescribing. The site can be accessed at www.GetRxConnected.com, and contains information for physicians and staff to use e-prescribing.

5. NY Attorney General investigates payment abuses by carriers

In an ongoing investigation into abusive payment practices by insurance carriers, New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo issued subpoenas to national carriers Aetna, CIGNA, UHC and WellPoint and regional plans Excellus and Blue Cross Blue Shield, GHI-HIP, and Independent Health. The case involves concerns of possible fraud and low payments for medical services. The attorney general contends that the above named companies all used the Ingenix software platform (which is owned by UnitedHealthGroup) to set low payment rates, thereby shifting greater costs to consumers or inadequate payments to providers. Additional details may be obtained from the press release issued by the attorney general at: http://www.oag.state.ny.us/press/2008/feb/feb13a_08.html

6. Pediatric Council Forum at 2008 ALF

AAP leadership has an opportunity to share information on chapter pediatric councils during a special workshop at the 2008 ALF. A panel will present on

chapter's experiences in developing pediatric councils and a health plan medical director will discuss ways to engage payers on pediatric issues. Speakers include:

- Anne Francis, MD, FAAP and chairperson of PPAAC
- Charles Barone II, MD, FAAP, President, Michigan Chapter
- Joanne M. Ray, DO, FAAP, Vice President, New Mexico Chapter
- Marie Barone Casalino, MD, MPH, FAAP, Acting Medical Director, New York Presbyterian Community Health Plan

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Have a carrier concern? Complete the AAP Hassle Factor Form on the AAP Member Center at <http://www.aap.org/moc/reimburse/hasslefactor/> (requires member log in). The AAP and chapters use the data to identify issues and discussion points with payers.

For additional information on AAP private payer advocacy, contact Lou Terranova, Senior Health Policy Analyst at lterranova@aap.org or 800/433-9016 ext 7633