

TriWest Announces 2006 Provider Seminar Schedule

TriWest's Provider Services staff is pleased to invite providers and their staff to attend one of our upcoming civilian provider seminars. The seminars will begin in March and will be held through early summer.

The seminar agenda includes information on the Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS), TRICARE programs and updates, TRICARE eligibility and benefits, referral/authorization processing, claims/billing tips, electronic claims filing, consult report tracking and much more.

To find out the dates, times and locations of seminars in your state, go to www.triwest.com, Provider Connection, click the registration link in the Take the First Step Today section, and select your state and seminar type from the drop-down menu.

By registering online, you will receive an immediate confirmation by e-mail, as well as reminder e-mails a few days before your seminar. ■

Avoid Claims Processing Problems

Follow these simple steps to ensure TRICARE claims are processed correctly the first time and avoid the hassle of denied claims.

1. Use the Correct Social Security Number

One of the most common reasons for claims denials is an incorrect Social Security number (SSN) used to submit a patient's claim. Providers and staff should use the TRICARE sponsor's SSN when filing a claim and not necessarily the patient's SSN. If the patient is not the sponsor, the patient's SSN will not be on file and the claim will be rejected.

There is a single exception to this rule: If the beneficiary indicates he or she is a former spouse with eligibility, then the patient's SSN must be used. An individual in this category will have an ID using that number.

2. Verify Patient's Address

Service members move or are in transit often. It's common for providers to have an old or temporary address on file. Ask beneficiaries to update their information at each visit.

3. Apply Accurate Coding

Use the [Physician's] current procedural terminology (CPT) or Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes that most accurately describe the procedure or service involved. Do not select codes that approximate the service involved, and avoid using unlisted or miscellaneous codes. Using unlisted or miscellaneous codes will slow down the claims processing. When no code exists, it is likely the procedure or service is not covered. If you must use an unclassified code or miscellaneous code, please use the description on the 837 transaction or provide a description if the claim is filed on paper.

4. Assign Primary and Supporting Codes

You can avoid claim line denials by assigning primary and supporting diagnoses codes that denote the reason for the procedure, as well as any diagnosis that affects treatment.

5. Use Proper V Codes

It is especially important to use only a proper V code for claims reimbursement. V codes describe preventive codes, but should not be used to support medical care. For example, V70.0 (Routine Exam) is not a payable code; V72.6 for Laboratory Test is too vague to support treatment. V20.2 for Well-Child Care is an appropriate code for a well-child visit, but would not support treatment (such as the procedure code 99212).

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File Claims with the Proper TRICARE Region

Unlike Medicare, which pays based on the location where services are rendered, providers caring for a patient who normally receives care in another TRICARE Region, including those who were displaced by the recent hurricanes, should work with that region's contractor (see below) to submit claims or ask questions. Contacting the patient's contractor instead of TriWest will result in a quicker response.

While Wisconsin Physicians Service (WPS), TriWest's partner for claims processing, will forward claims, it could result in a delay. If a claim is filed electronically with WPS, the claim will be dropped to paper and will further delay the claim response.

North Region Contractor

The contractor for the TRICARE North Region is Health Net Federal Services, Inc. You can contact Health Net at 1-877-TRICARE or www.healthnetfederalservices.com.

Health Net serves TRICARE beneficiaries in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and portions of Tennessee (Ft. Campbell area), Iowa (Rock Island Arsenal area) and Missouri (St. Louis area).

South Region Contractor

The contractor for the South Region is Humana Military Healthcare Services. You can contact Humana Military's

claims subcontractor, PGBA, at 1-800-403-3950. You can contact Humana Military at 1-800-444-5445 or www.humana-military.com.

Humana Military serves TRICARE beneficiaries in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee (excluding the Ft. Campbell area), and Texas (excluding the El Paso area).

West Region Contractor

The contractor for the West Region is TriWest Healthcare Alliance. You can contact TriWest at 1-888-TRIWEST or www.triwest.com.

TriWest serves TRICARE beneficiaries in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa (excluding the Rock Island Arsenal area), Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri (excluding St. Louis), Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming and a small portion of western Texas that includes El Paso and the Ft. Bliss area.

Overseas Contractor

The contractor for Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific area is WPS. You can contact WPS at 1-608-301-2310.

For general questions or further information, call TriWest at 1-888-TRIWEST or visit www.triwest.com. To follow up on specific claims issues for other regions, please contact the appropriate region. ■

Avoid Claims Processing Problems

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6. Submit Supporting Documentation

Submit all supporting documentation, if necessary, for the care rendered. You should also ensure the following information is accurate when you are submitting a claim on behalf of your TRICARE patient:

- The date of service
- The patient's date of birth
- The total amount billed

- The rendering provider's ID number [as of Jan. 1, 2006, this can include the National Provider Identifier (NPI)] in Box 24K (CMS-1500) for each service line or in the appropriate segment element in the 837 file. The appropriate ID number can also include the UPIN or TRICARE provider number, or the name (last name, first name) of the provider.

Claims Resolution Assistance

TriWest assists providers with claims questions and problems through the toll-free number, 1-888-TRIWEST. Call this number before initiating any collection action against a TRICARE beneficiary.

More information on claims submission requirements can be found in your *TRICARE Provider Handbook* or online at www.triwest.com. ■

Identifying PTSD in Hurricane Survivors

Recent articles in this bulletin have discussed how to identify and treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in combat personnel returning from the Persian Gulf. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina—which damaged several military facilities in the New Orleans and Biloxi areas—and Hurricanes Rita and Wilma, TRICARE providers also need to be vigilant about spotting PTSD symptoms in these survivors.

According to the National Center for PTSD, almost everyone who survives a disaster will experience stress reactions. It is important for providers to assist their patients in recognizing that most of these stress reactions are normal.

Survivors will commonly find themselves reliving and thinking about the experience. Over time, these symptoms will gradually decrease. Studies reported in the *Disaster Mental Health Response Handbook NSW Health, 2000*, indicate that most survivors who experience a stress response will recover fully within 6 to 16 months.

In their “Effects of Traumatic Stress in a Disaster Situation” fact sheet, the National Center for PTSD identifies symptoms that may indicate that an individual may need intervention from a medical or mental-health professional. In some cases, symptoms may not develop immediately. These symptoms include:

- Severe dissociation (feeling as if the world is unreal, feeling unconnected to one’s own body, losing one’s sense of identity, taking on a new identity and/or suffering from amnesia)
- Severe intrusive re-experiencing (flashbacks, terrifying screen memories or nightmares, and/or repetitive automatic reenactment)
- Extreme avoidance (agoraphobic-like social or vocational withdrawal and/or compulsive avoidance)
- Severe hyper-arousal (panic episodes, terrifying nightmares, difficulty controlling violent impulses and/or inability to concentrate)

- Debilitating anxiety (ruminative worry, severe phobias, unshakable obsessions, paralyzing nervousness and/or fear of losing control/going crazy)
- Severe depression (lack of pleasure in life, feelings of worthlessness, self-blame, dependency and/or early wakening)
- Problematic substance use (abuse or dependency and/or self-medication)
- Psychotic symptoms (delusions, hallucinations, and/or bizarre thoughts or images)

Treating PTSD

Blake Chaffee, Ph.D., vice president of Behavioral Health Operations for TriWest, states that early identification and intervention have been shown to be helpful in reducing long-term, disabling symptoms. Treatment can help a person know what to expect; relieve uncomfortable symptoms like insomnia, anxiety and depression; improve anger and stress management skills; improve intimacy and communication skills; and restore hope and direction in life.

Not all family members need psychiatric consultation. Some may need information, such as pamphlets about mental health issues, or psychosocial interventions, such as financial counseling, social services, and legal or housing assistance.

There are excellent fact sheets available for providers and survivors on the National Center for PTSD Web site at www.ncptsd.org.

If you have questions regarding beneficiaries’ benefits or resources, contact TriWest at 1-888-TRIWEST. ■



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Phoenix, AZ 85080

CONTACTS

TriWest Customer Service
1-888-TRIWEST
www.triwest.com

TRICARE Alaska Office
(Alaskan providers only)
1-907-743-1800

Wisconsin Physicians Service
(Electronic claims set up only)
1-800-782-2680
www.wpsic.com

Express Scripts
(Pharmacy inquiries)
1-866-DoD-TRRx
1-866-DoD-TMOP
www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE

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Rebuilding Medical Records for Displaced Patients

Last year proved to be a very active and devastating hurricane season. TRICARE beneficiaries displaced from the South Region by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma may be coming to you for care.

Because their providers also were affected by the disaster, many of these beneficiaries do not have access to their medical records.

“We are a central repository for a narrow range of medical records, so we may have certain records from affected facilities scanned into our system,” explains Sandy McClish, R.N., manager of Review Services, Medical Affairs at the Humana Military corporate office in Louisville, Ky.

Since the type of data the office is required to archive tends to be narrow, McClish’s team will only be able to restore records in a limited number of cases.

Humana Military asks providers seeking pre-hurricane records to designate a contact person to help maintain beneficiary privacy.

Sandy McClish can be reached at 502-580-1505. ■

