

Physician Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes July 31, 2006 - Chicago, Illinois

PAC Members in Attendance:	
Sam Nussbaum, M.D.	Theodore Mazer, M.D.
David Blumenthal, M.D.	Mitchell Miller, M.D.
Verna Gibbs, M.D.	Richard Tuck, M.D.
Jeffrey Linzer, M.D.	Simeon Schwartz, M.D.
Alan London, M.D.	David Welsh, M.D.
PAC Members unable to Attend:	
Robert Berenson, M.D.	Hector Flores, M.D.
Other Support from WellPoint:	
Alan Rosenberg, M.D.; Amy Sansbury; Christina McGovern	

Topics and Discussion:

I. Goals and Objectives

During the inaugural meeting of the WellPoint Physician Advisory Committee (PAC), the Committee discussed the focus of the group to ensure a balance between high level vision and specific detailed issues. The Committee adopted the following mission statement:

The mission of the WellPoint PAC is to improve health care and clinical quality by enhancing relationships between physicians, their patients and WellPoint, including issues related to regional or national administrative matters between WellPoint and physicians.

II. Advancing Evidence-based Medicine

The role of Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) was discussed. Dr. Rosenberg provided an overview of the WellPoint medical policy, technology assessment and clinical UM guideline development process. The use of physician specialty society input and academic medical center feedback was commended by the Committee.

Other topics discussed included an administrative exemption program for high quality and cost-efficient physicians, opportunities to extend evidence-supporting literature to network physicians and proactive notification of physicians regarding new evidence-based policies. WellPoint agreed to investigate these opportunities and these topics will be discussed in more depth at future PAC meetings.

III. Rewarding Clinical Excellence

Dr. Nussbaum, referring to materials distributed to PAC members in advance of the meeting, provided an overview of WellPoint's pay for performance (P4P) initiatives. Members of the Committee noted that WellPoint is a leader in its clinical outcomes measurements; however, the group acknowledged that the industry as a whole hasn't identified an effective solution for rewarding quality.

With general consensus that payers should reward physicians differently based on quality, the group discussed concerns and challenges related to P4P measures. Issues included patient compliance gaps and limitation of claims-based data and the ability to collect/measure data.

It was agreed that this will be a topic for further discussion and that feedback from the PAC will help to shape P4P programs at WellPoint.

WellPoint requested input from the PAC members regarding the 2006 Physician Satisfaction Survey, which was under development at the time of the PAC meeting. Recommendations from PAC members will be considered and incorporated as appropriate to ensure a comprehensive representation of survey questions.

IV. Transparency in Health Care Costs and Quality

Dr. Nussbaum, referring to materials distributed in advance of the meeting, summarized the concept of transparency in health care costs and quality.

Group discussion followed, regarding the opportunity to refer members to facilities based on quality and cost information and the important link of physician performance and hospital quality.

The group acknowledged greater variability in payments for like services to hospitals versus physicians. Therefore for transparency, physician quality outcome data is of more significance than physician cost. Concern was expressed regarding the accuracy of physician quality data currently used by the industry.

Members of the PAC agreed to bring forth suggestions regarding effective ways to disclose quality and cost information.

V. Issues Encountered by Physicians and Health Plans- Reducing Administrative Burdens

Issues regarding administrative burdens were raised; examples include consistency in recognition of modifiers and specific coding combinations, reimbursement practices and processes and/or rules regarding pre-certification of services. WellPoint agreed to investigate and respond to each of the issues raised.

VI. Open Discussions/ Next Meeting/Location/Open Issues

The next PAC meeting will be held on December 4th, 2006.