



Physicians Committed
to Quality

monthly memo mvma ipa

An important announcement from Richard B. Toll, M.D., MVMA President

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Announcing the MVMA Radiology Exemption Program

Physicians are aware that radiology utilization has been increasing at a high rate for the past number of years. It is well-recognized that there is a general shift in practice toward obtaining more advanced imaging. For the past three years, in an attempt to address potential inappropriate utilization, MVMA has required primary care physicians to pre-certify all non-urgent/non-emergent CT and MR scans by contacting the MVP Utilization Management department. Since that time, we have been reviewing utilization data based on the ordering physician of record. The frequency of scans ordered by each individual physician has been evaluated on the basis of the number of unique MVP patients seen. The information was gathered in two separate reports that were based on large panels, and the remaining physicians with smaller panels.

The MVMA Board of Directors has approved an exemption program, effective January 1, 2005 for all primary care physicians with the exception of those individuals with high utilization who are responsible for 25 percent of all MR and CT scans ordered by PCPs. This translates to 58 PCPs out of the 455 who ordered scans, or approximately 13 percent, who will continue to pre-certify scans they order. We have also identified the top 25 percent of PCPs who have the highest frequency of ordered scans, and selected those with a pass rate of less than 85 percent to continue pre-certification. The goal of the program is to eliminate the hassle factor of pre-certification for the majority of PCPs and focus on areas of concern related to ordering patterns.

In addition, all midlevel providers working with primary care physicians will be required to continue pre-certification of scans they order, as well as new physicians joining a primary care group, for a period of at least six months. The intent is to gather data regarding their ordering patterns compared to their peers during that time.

How will the process change for exempted physicians? They will call the MVP UM department as usual, at 1-800-568-0458, option 2, and receive an authorization number at the time of that call. The authorization number is important for scheduling the scan to ensure claim payment. We are working with MVP to develop other options for obtaining the authorization number, such as online authorizations and fax notifications. We are sensitive to the issues involving multiple phone calls and hold times.

What is the process for those physicians required to continue precertification, and new physicians & midlevel providers? These physicians will be required to contact National Imaging Associates (NIA) at 1-800-642-2602 to precertify the scans. This is the number dedicated specifically for MVP-related precertifications.

Why NIA? Employer groups offering MVP to their employees have done so with the understanding that there is a radiology management program in place in MVP's broad geographic service area. In all other regions, NIA is utilized. We have been made aware of physicians' concerns regarding customer service issues with NIA through other payor arrangements, and are working closely with NIA and MVP to ensure that this does not occur with this new initiative.

Are the exempt physicians always going to remain exempted? What about specialists? MVMA will produce utilization reports every six months for comparison. The majority of specialists have been exempted from pre-certification for the past three years. Specialists who have been identified as having ordered at least 10 studies per six month time period, with a frequency greater than two standard deviations from the mean will be considered for removal of exempt status. A meeting will occur with the

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physician to provide an opportunity for discussion. If follow-up measures six months later show no improvement, the exempt status will be removed. PCPs who are initially exempt from pre-certification, but show an increase in utilization at any six-month interval, will be met with individually to begin this same process.

What if I am a new MVMA participating primary care physician? New physicians will be required to pre-certify MR and CT scans for the first six months, while we gather data to determine ordering patterns compared to your peers. At that time, if there are concerns, we will contact you.

What about midlevel providers who order scans? Midlevel providers (PA, NP, CNM) will be required to continue pre-certification of all scans for at least the next six months. Up to the present time, claims and authorizations have been submitted under the physician's name. We will be updating the statistics every six months, and we expect to see data specific to midlevel ordering patterns emerging.

This is an important point. It is essential that the authorization or pre-certification information include the **actual ordering provider information**, to clearly capture this data. Once we have reliable data about midlevel ordering patterns, we will begin the exemption process. An outgrowth of this should be improved communication between the midlevel provider and the physician to consider whether the scan should be ordered.

Can MR and CT scans of the joints be ordered by PCPs now? Ordering of the MRs and CTs of the joints will continue to be allowed for specialists only. Joints also include hips and shoulders. The exception to this will be the scan of an extremity where evaluation of a mass is requested.

Please note: Sinus CTs, and CT scans of the facial bones will no longer require pre-certification, or an authorization number.

There is an appeal mechanism in place to address those physicians who are not exempt at any point, but feel they should be. The initial appeal will be to the MVMA Medical Director, Dr. David Phelps, with an explanation as to why the exemption is warranted. If the denial is upheld, then the appeal will be taken to the MVMA Peer Review Committee.