December 23, 2020

The MMS will continue to monitor developments related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the response by state and federal agencies. For current information, including updates from NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: massmed.org/covid-19.

Government Guidelines

Hospitals directed to postpone/cancel nonessential elective invasive procedures starting Dec. 26

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) released new guidance yesterday following rising concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic and the availability of health care personnel. Per the new guidance, all hospitals are directed to postpone or cancel nonessential elective invasive procedures beginning at 12:01 a.m. on December 26, 2020, and hospitals must suspend the scheduling of any new inpatient nonessential elective procedures until further notice.

Bill affecting telemedicine and out of network billing advances to state legislature
The Joint Conference Committee on Health Care released a final, negotiated bill last night that was taken up today in the state legislature for final passage. An analysis of the bill is available here.

The final compromise reflects positive results for MMS advocacy in telemedicine, administrative simplification, and out of network billing. For example, the MMS successfully advocated for a broad coverage expansion of telemedicine (including audio-only) and encouraged the legislature to avoid problematic surprise billing solutions that, if enacted, would have given insurers more leverage across the state.

Regarding scope of practice, the legislation grants independent practice to nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and psychiatric nurses. Education requirements and supervision for a defined time period were also included in the language. Advance practice nurses are required to be held to “parity” of requirements that physicians are currently subject to, such as malpractice coverage and public profiles. For more information about this legislative development, please see the detailed summary or the full text of the bill.

The MMS will continue to advocate for legislation consistent with MMS policy and the interests of physicians and patients. More details will be shared with you about upcoming MMS strategies for advocacy in the next legislative session, which begins in just two weeks.

Public Health

FDA publishes vaccine fact sheets in multiple languages for patients

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released fact sheets for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines in many languages—including Arabic, Chinese, French, and Spanish—that can be shared with your patients.

Practice Management
Steps to prepare your practice for COVID-19 vaccination

Unsure how to ready your practice for COVID-19 vaccination? The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) encourages you to follow these first steps:

- Identify the lead person at your practice for COVID-19 vaccination planning and implementation.
- Register with the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS). You can confirm registration at miishelpdesk@mass.gov.
- Once MIIS is completed, submit an electronically signed Mass. COVID-19 Vaccination Program (MCVP) enrollment form. You can confirm that your facility has signed and electronically submitted the MCVP enrollment form by contacting the DPH Vaccine Unit at dph-vaccine-management@massmail.state.ma.us.
- For FAQ about the enrollment form, click here.

The MMS is aware that hospitals, health centers, and some of the larger multispecialty group practices received the first round of the vaccine. The DPH anticipates that the next cohort will include private practicing non-affiliated COVID-facing primary care practices and their staff. The MMS will continue to publish updates in this newsletter as details are clarified; we hope to report more information by next week.

For details about the MCVP Guidance for Healthcare Providers and Organizations, click here.

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DOI and CHIA meeting for providers: telehealth, prior authorization

The Division of Insurance (DOI) and the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) hosts regular meetings to offer providers an opportunity to raise questions and concerns related to COVID-19 commercial insurance provisions. The next meeting will focus on telehealth, prior authorization, and other topics and will be recorded for later viewing. The DOI and CHIA, along with the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) and the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association (MHA), sponsor these calls.
• Date: Thursday, January 7
• Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. ET
• Meeting ID: 290 289 5643
• Passcode: 501

Join the meeting

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