April 21, 2021

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.

J & J’s Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine

ACIP meets Friday to discuss J&J’s Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration have recommended a pause in the use of the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine in the United States out of an abundance of caution, effective Tuesday, April 13. The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will hold its second emergency meeting to discuss J&J/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine on Friday, April 23, 2021.

People who have received the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine within the past three weeks who develop severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath should seek medical care right away. Read the CDC Q&A here.

Detecting & treating CVST with thrombocytopenia
A recent CDC Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) webinar presents the latest evidence on cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) with thrombocytopenia associated with the administration of the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine. Speakers discuss what is known about CVST, the importance of early detection, and updated vaccine recommendations.

Watch the recording here

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has issued a clinical alert to make sure the health care provider community is aware of the potential for CVST, and to provide guidance on recognition and the unique management required with this type of blood clot.

Read the clinical health alert here

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**Public Health**

**HHS extends public health emergency declaration 90 days more**

As a result of the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has renewed the January 31, 2020 determination that a public health emergency has existed since January 27, 2020, nationwide. The renewal determination takes effect on April 21, 2021 and runs through July 20, 2021.

This action means all HHS/CMS waivers and flexibilities currently in place will continue until July 20, 2021 unless earlier terminated by Secretary Xavier Becerra. Many waivers and flexibilities put into place by states and commercial payers are tied to these declarations and therefore will also be extended.

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**FDA revokes EUA for bamlanivimab when administered alone**

On April 16, the FDA revoked the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for bamlanivimab, when administered alone, due to a sustained increase in COVID-19 viral variants in the U.S. that are resistant to this antibody therapy. The FDA determined that the known and potential benefits of bamlanivimab, when administered alone, no longer
outweigh the known and potential risks. Medicare will cover and pay for bamlanivimab, when administered alone, for dates of service from November 10, 2020 – April 16, 2021.

The FDA indicates that alternative monoclonal antibody therapies remain appropriate to treat COVID-19 patients. Health care providers may continue using these authorized therapies when administered together:

- Casirivimab & imdevimab
- Bamlanivimab & etesevimab

More information:

- [Fact Sheet for Health Care Providers EUA of Casirivimab and Imdevimab Section 15, Antiviral Resistance](#)
- [Fact Sheet for Health Care Providers EUA of Bamlanivimab and Etesevimab Section 15, Antiviral Resistance](#)
- [Monoclonal Antibody COVID-19 Infusion webpage](#)

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**Practice Management**

**Home oxygen therapy: COVID-19 PHE Reference Guide**

As a result of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has issued waivers and flexibilities to assist Medicare beneficiaries in obtaining the services they need and allowing practitioners to utilize home oxygen therapy when they determine it is warranted.

While the coverage criteria for home oxygen have not changed, [CMS-1744-IFC](#) and [CMS-5531-IFC](#) have provided direction regarding use of telemedicine in place of face-to-face requirements and nonenforcement of the clinical indications for coverage of home oxygen therapy. CMS has also emphasized that the oxygen must be reasonable and necessary for the condition for which it is being prescribed and that condition must be documented in a medical record.

[Learn more here](#) about specific documentation requirements.
United Healthcare COVID-19 billing updates

Click here to learn more about UHC latest billing updates including:

- COVID-19 vaccine billing
- COVID-19 testing and testing-related services
- COVID-19 treatment
- COVID-19 medical supply code
- Urgent care testing and vaccine administration

Final opportunity: Join DOI-MassHealth listening session on telehealth, Thursday, April 29, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

A final information session is being held for individual physicians and others to share thoughts with the Massachusetts Division of Insurance (DOI) and MassHealth on implementation of telehealth provisions in Chapter 260 of the Acts of 2020 as enacted on January 1, 2021.

In recent months, DOI and MassHealth have held conversations with physicians, consumers, insurance carriers, and other stakeholders to hear thoughts on what guidance the Division of Insurance and MassHealth might provide through bulletins, regulations, or other communications to allow for the implementation of the noted provisions.

The Massachusetts Medical Society has actively engaged in each session to advocate on behalf of physicians and will continue to do so. If you have specific ideas consistent with the topics listed below, please contact Leda Anderson at landerson@mms.org or Bissan Biary at bbiary@mms.org.

Final DOI listening session: Thursday, April 29, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. This newly added session is being offered by the DOI for physicians and others unable to attend previous daytime calls. Topics can include those previously covered and other issues as necessary: communicating coverage to patients; definition of primary care, behavioral health,
chronic disease management; reimbursement and coding; appropriateness and utilization management.

To join the Zoom meetings, click here.

- **Meeting ID:** 290 289 5643
- **Passcode:** 501

Join via telephone:

- (646) 558-8656 (ET)
- (646) 518-9805 (ET)