March 15, 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.

Practice Management

Johnson & Johnson vaccine administration rate set

On Friday, March 12, 2021, MassHealth issued a bulletin to identify a rate of reimbursement for the administration of a newly approved one-shot Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. The bulletin can be found here. In Bulletin 2021-01, the Division of Insurance (DOI) noted that it expected that carriers would “reimburse providers, whether in-network or out-of-network, for the cost of administering COVID-19 vaccines. For in-network and out-of-network providers, carriers are expected to reimburse providers at a level that is always higher than the MassHealth rate of reimbursement for the same service.”

Thursday: DOI, CHIA, MMS and MHA call on impact to practice
From **2 p.m. to 3 p.m., on Thursday**, March 18, the Massachusetts Medical Society will facilitate a discussion with the Division of Insurance (DOI), the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) and the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association (MHA). Participants may bring their questions and concerns about the effect of COVID-19 on practices, including prior authorizations, billing and coding.

To join the Zoom meeting, click here.

- Meeting ID: 290 289 5643
- Passcode: 501

Join via telephone:

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

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**Administration increases Medicare payment for vaccine**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced it is increasing the Medicare payment amount for administering the COVID-19 vaccine. This new and higher payment rate will support important actions taken by providers that are designed to increase the number of vaccines they can furnish each day, including establishing new or growing existing vaccination sites, conducting patient outreach and education, and hiring additional staff. At a time when vaccine supply is growing, CMS is supporting provider efforts to expand capacity and ensure that all Americans can be vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible.

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**FDA authorizes Adaptive Biotechnologies T-Detect COVID Test**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) to Adaptive Biotechnologies for its T-Detect COVID Test. The T-Detect COVID Test analyzes DNA from a patient’s T cells to aid in identifying people with an adaptive T cell immune response to SARS-CoV-2, indicating recent or previous SARS-CoV-2
infection. The test should be used together with a clinical examination and a patient’s medical history. Negative results do not rule out acute or current SARS-CoV-2 infection.

What every clinician should know about vaccine safety and effectiveness, how to address patient questions and concerns

During a March 9, 2021 Clinical Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) call, clinicians received an update on COVID-19 vaccine safety and effectiveness for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, including data on COVID-19 vaccine safety in pregnancy. Clinicians will also get information about the v-safe COVID-19 Pregnancy Registry, which collects additional health information that helps CDC monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in people who are pregnant. To view a recording of the presentation, click here.

The Joint Commission guidance relating to mental health

During the past year, The Joint Commission (TJC) has come out with new guidance encouraging all hospitals and physician organizations to refrain from asking during credentialing or re-credentialing if clinicians ever have been diagnosed with, or treated for, a mental health disorder.

TJC has joined a growing number of advocates, such as the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) Workgroup on Physician Wellness and Burnout, who have also issued similar recommendations.

The Joint Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) – Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association (MHA) Task Force of Physician Burnout has reviewed and supports the FSMB and TJC in these efforts. Specifically, TJC outlines the following points in this communication.

DOI and MassHealth listening sessions on telehealth provisions
The Massachusetts Division of Insurance (DOI) and MassHealth are scheduling information sessions (see schedule below) to discuss the implementation of telehealth provisions in Chapter 260 of the Acts of 2020 as enacted on January 1, 2021.

During these information sessions, DOI and MassHealth are interested in having conversations with physicians, consumers, insurance carriers, and other interested parties to hear thoughts about guidance that the Division of Insurance and MassHealth might provide through the issuing of bulletins, regulations, or other communications to allow for the implementation of the noted provisions.

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) will be actively engaged in each of these sessions, advocating on behalf of the physician community. If you have specifics consistent with the identified topic areas listed below, please contact Leda Anderson at Landerson@mms.org or Bissan Biary at BBiary@mms.org.

**DOI listening sessions schedule**

- Wednesday, March 31, 10 a.m. - 11:30; Planned topics: Reimbursement and billing
- Wednesday, April 14, 10 a.m. - 11:30; Planned topics: Utilization review for telehealth and telehealth standards to be added to managed care accreditation reviews

To join the Zoom meetings, [click here](#).

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