

FOCUS

Route to:

The Quarterly Newsletter for Physician Office Staff

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TB Update

Since 1985, there has been a dramatic increase in Tuberculosis (TB) cases in the United States. The rate of new cases of TB in the United States population has increased 18 percent, reversing a 30-year downward trend.

The first important step in reducing exposure to TB is early identification of known and suspected cases. Then, appropriate isolation measures can be followed.

To accomplish this in the office setting, any patient who has been coughing three weeks or longer and answers yes to any of the following:

- coughing up blood
- recent weight loss
- night sweats
- fever

or

- a history of recent treatment for TB should be removed from the waiting area, placed in another room, and offered a face mask.

In addition, it is important to ask anyone coughing or sneezing to cover his or her mouth with tissues. (Provide tissues if necessary.) This reduces the spread of TB or any other infectious disease transmitted by the respiratory route.

The Centers for Disease Control and OSHA recommendations for an effective TB infection control program in the health care setting are expected to be issued this year. The full scope of these extensive recommendations is yet to be determined, hence the affect on physicians' offices is not presently known.

Information regarding these forthcoming regulations will be published in future issues of *Focus*. If you have any questions regarding this issue or other infection control issues, please contact the Infection Control Department at 402-2413.

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610 Area Code Reminder

Effective January 8, many counties in Pennsylvania located within the 215 Area Code received a new Area Code -- 610.

Just a reminder that with this change, you may want to begin alerting your patients and referring physicians of the new area code.

Additionally, as your supply of letterhead, business cards, and other office stationery becomes depleted, remember to change the area code.

Important Changes in Blue Cross

Blue Cross has added two new programs which it will sponsor to corporations: **Point of Service** and **Community Choice**.

Some of the employers covered by **Point of Service** include GPU, Keystone Financial, and Carpenter Technology.

Employers covered by **Community Choice** include Air Products, PP&L, Binney & Smith, Fuller Company, Mack Trucks, and Portland Cement.

A toll-free number is available through Blue Cross if you have any questions regarding these two new plans. The number is 1-800-572-5751.

For billing purposes, Lehigh Valley Hospital has added eight insurance plan name codes to PHAMIS as follows:

COMCH361PY - Community Choice 361 Psych
COMCH361BU - Community Choice 361 Burn
COMCH361OP - Community Choice Outpatient
COMCH361IP - Community Choice Inpatient

POS361PY - Point of Service 361 Psych
POS361BU - Point of Service 361 Burn
POS361OP - Point of Service 361 Outpatient
POS361IP - Point of Service 361 Inpatient

Medicare Rejects Invalid Code Claims

Beginning in January, Pennsylvania Blue Shield-Medicare will reject claims reported with invalid diagnosis codes.

According to Blue Shield, previously, the carrier noted the invalid or incorrect code then notified the physician of the error. As of January 1, HCFA requires carriers to deny services that are reported with invalid diagnosis codes.

For assigned claims, beginning with dates of service January 1, 1994, Blue Shield announced it will begin to deny payment only for services associated with a diagnosis code that is considered invalid. For unassigned claims, the

carrier indicated it will continue to develop these claims for the correct diagnosis code information.

Claims submitted with other coding errors, including truncated diagnosis codes (those not taken to the highest specificity), age/diagnosis code conflict, and sex/diagnosis code conflict, will continue to be monitored, and physicians will receive educational messages if errors occur.

For more information, contact Dennis Olmstead at the Pennsylvania Medical Society, 1-800-228-7823, Ext. 483.

Community Choice News

Do you have questions regarding the status of your application for Community Choice? Good News! There is a telephone number for physicians' offices to call to check on their credentialing in Community Choice. Through the Credentialing Office at Keystone Health Plan, a physician's office can find out if there is anything missing from their application, the status of the credentialing process, or if the physician's practice has been accepted but has not yet received notification.

The number for the Credentialing Office is 1-800-446-4638. Chris Marquette is handling the Lehigh Valley area.

In addition, if you have any questions or concerns about any other hospital-related managed care issues, contact Krista Miller, Provider Liaison, Lehigh Valley Hospital, at 402-7440.

Physician Payment Seminar Scheduled

Physician Payment Updates for 1994, a one-day, Pennsylvania Medical Society-sponsored workshop to help physicians and office staff maximize reimbursement under the third year of the RBRVS fee schedule, will be held on February 9 at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in Allentown.

The seminar covers the major changes in the Medicare fee schedule for 1994, including new relative values and coding changes in the 1994 CPT book. It also covers the role of physician extenders and their reimbursement, as well as Medicare amendments for 1994.

Registration fee is \$195 per person for Pennsylvania Medical Society members and their office staff, and \$225 for non-members. Discounts are available for multiple registrations from the same practice.

For more information, contact Linda Boyer, Department of Meeting Services, Pennsylvania Medical Society, at 1-800-228-7823, Ext. 258.

Medical Assistance Reminder

Medical Assistance (Medicaid) will pay an enhanced fee for the initial office visit for a new patient.

Services should be reported using procedure code 99205 (office and other outpatient visits for the evaluation and management of a new patient-comprehensive service.)

Medicaid reimbursement is \$30, with a limit of one payment per recipient, per provider, per lifetime.

Medical Assistance Bulletin 01-92-03 discusses the increased fee.

For more information, contact Rick Orlandi at the Pennsylvania Medical Society, 1-800-228-7823, Ext. 484.

You Gotta Have Heart

February is Heart Month both in the United States and Canada. Take time this month to educate yourself about the realities of heart disease and its prevention.

Taking Heart Disease Prevention to Heart

The fight against cardiovascular disease can't start too early. The key, say experts, is to affect the habits of young children regarding smoking, nutrition, and exercise.

Consider these facts:

♥ Every year, children and teens consume more than 947 million packs of cigarettes. More than 25 percent of the high school seniors who smoke said they tried their first cigarette while in the sixth grade.

♥ Studies show that at least half of today's youth do not get enough regular exercise. Less than 36 percent of elementary and secondary schools offer daily physical education classes, which means many children are not receiving the training that will nurture life-long fitness patterns.

♥ Some 25 percent of all children are overweight and at an increased risk of obesity as adults.

Smoking, excessive weight, and a general lack of fitness all contribute to heart disease. As a parent, what can you do to encourage healthy habits for your children? Here are some suggestions.

♥ Set a good example. There's a good chance that a young person will smoke if his or her parents do. But the reverse is also true. You can be a good role model for eating and exercise habits, as well.

♥ Educate your children. Explain how smoking can hurt their bodies; how exercise and nutrition will keep them healthy and strong.

♥ Encourage your children to participate in age-appropriate sports or lessons. Put limits on the amount of television they watch or time spent playing computer games.

♥ Exercise as a family. Whether it's walking, hiking, biking, swimming, or other forms of exercise, it will be good for all of you. And fun, too!

♥ Try to keep your kids on a healthy diet -- one that is low in fat.

Danger Signals

Time is the most critical factor in surviving a heart attack. The sooner a person gets medical treatment, the better his or her chance of recovery. Be aware of a heart attack's warning signs:

♥ Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain, usually located in the center of the chest, behind the breastbone.

♥ Pain that starts to spread to the shoulders, neck, or arms.

Continued on Page 5

♥ Pain that lasts two minutes or longer. It may not be severe, and it may seem to come and go, but it should not be minimized or dismissed.

♥ At more advanced stages of an attack, the victim may experience weakness, dizziness, fainting, sweating, nausea, shortness of breath, or more severe pain.

Under Pressure

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is called a **silent killer** because it has no outward symptoms. But it can lead to a stroke, heart disease, or kidney failure. That's why it's important to get your blood pressure checked regularly.

How can you tell if you are at risk? Here are some common factors that can lead to high blood pressure:

- ♥ excessive weight
- ♥ a diet high in salt
- ♥ excessive alcohol consumption
- ♥ a family history of high blood pressure

High blood pressure is very common among African Americans, and tends to be more severe than is the case with other groups. Also, most women face a greater risk than men. Birth control pills can cause high blood pressure. Pregnant women can develop high blood pressure very quickly in the last three months of pregnancy. And as they age, postmenopausal women face a greater chance of high blood pressure than men.

Who's New

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Eyeball Aerobics

Working at a computer terminal for long periods can bring on headaches, blurred vision, eyestrain, and even depression. To take care of your eyes, try these simple relaxation exercises:

- ◆ Periodically, gaze at some distant object -- at least 20 feet away -- for up to a minute. Changing your field of vision will force your eyes to adjust, relieving stiffness and tension.

- ◆ Slowly roll your eyes clockwise three or four times -- then reverse the direction.

- ◆ Blink deliberately and frequently. This helps moisten and clean your eyes, minimizing the itchiness of tired, dry eyes.

Observances & Dates to Remember

February: American Heart Month, Afro-American History Month, National Cherry Month, National Snackfood Month

February 2: Groundhog Day - Since weather prediction is still an inexact science, the tradition of the groundhog as a prognosticator persists. If he emerges on this day and sees his shadow, we can expect six more weeks of winter. If not, we can look forward to mild temperatures and an early spring.

February 4: Halfway Point of Winter - No matter what the groundhog says, at 3:27 a.m. EST, 44 days, 12 hours, and one minute will have elapsed, with the equivalent officially remaining until the spring equinox on March 20.

February 14: Clean Out Your Computer Day - The second Monday in February is dedicated every year to purging and organizing the computer files that are devouring disk space and slowing your systems.

February 21: Presidents' Day - The third Monday in February provides an opportunity to observe the birthdays of two of this country's greatest presidents: George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

March: American Red Cross Month, Foot Health Month, Women's History Month, Nutrition Month, Peanut Month, Music in Our Schools Month

March 10: 118th Anniversary of the Invention of the Telephone

March 20-26: American Chocolate Week - Whether you prefer milk or dark, candy or cookies, or any of a number of shapes, sizes, and varieties, you'll probably want to indulge yourself at least once this week!

March 20: First Day of Spring - Time to break out the gardening tools and the cotton knits. In the Northern Hemisphere, spring officially begins at 3:28 p.m. EST.



☺ A kiss is a pleasant reminder that two heads are better than one.

☺ For Valentine's Day, 15-year old Bobby wanted to send a special present to his very first girlfriend, Betty. After much deliberation at the florist, he picked out a beautiful orchid and signed the card: "To my Valentine, with all my love and most of my allowance."

☺ Three stores located adjacent to one another in the same building were always trying to outdo one another in attracting customers. One day, a sign in the store on the left advertised a "Year-End Clearance." The next day, a sign in the store on the right read "Going Out Of Business Sale." How could the store in the middle compete? The savvy entrepreneur posted a third sign: "MAIN ENTRANCE."

☺ By working faithfully 8 hours a day, you may eventually get to be boss and work 12 hours a day." - Robert Frost

☺ The CEO of a prominent auto manufacturer filmed a successful television advertisement claiming that he personally had assembled a car in just 15 minutes.

The next day the CEO received a call asking if the commercial was true. "Certainly," he replied, "Why do you ask?"

"Because I think I have the car," was the irate response.

Tip of the Month

First impressions are lasting ones. People are quick to make judgments from what they see. When you are representing your organization, a bad first impression could ruin a potential business opportunity. Hence, a good first impression can reap solid rewards. Make the most of your one chance!

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