



QUALITY IS OUR IMAGE

acr.org

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Dear Hawaii Medical Association and all Hawaii Physicians,

The American College of Radiology (ACR) recently became aware of the challenges facing all Hawaii physicians based on the implementation of prior authorization requirements by the Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA), administered by National Imaging Associates Inc. (NIA), when advanced diagnostic imaging services are requested. This issue has been extensively covered by multiple Hawaii lay press publications, with descriptions from many of you about the impact this has had on your ability to provide timely high quality care to your patients. We share your concern with this intrusion into the physician patient relationship and want to assist you in reestablishing that cornerstone of medical care while responding to payer concerns about appropriate use of advanced diagnostic imaging services.

We have been in contact with the Hawaii Radiological Society (HRS) over the past several weeks, led by their President Elizabeth Ignacio MD, Scott Grosskreutz MD, and others, who have met with the Hawaii Medical Association leadership. The good news is that there is a solution that can be easily incorporated into your normal workflow that provides evidence based recommendations on the use (or avoidance) of imaging services in a broad spectrum of clinical conditions and disease states. In addition, the ACR was pleased to be able to provide data demonstrating that imaging utilization in the Medicare population in Hawaii ranks near the bottom of the 50 states.

Recognizing the difficulty facing referring physicians and other providers in selecting among the complex spectrum of imaging examinations, the ACR has been developing Appropriate Use Criteria (AUC), called the ACR Appropriateness Criteria(AC)™ since 1993. These are a result of ongoing work by multispecialty panels (radiologists and over 20 other specialties) who review the most recent literature (nearly 6000 references) and thus provide evidence based ratings of the value of different imaging exams, including all advanced diagnostic imaging (CT, MR, PET, Nuclear Medicine), based on the patient's condition or complaints. The development of these criteria is completely transparent. In fact, the ACR AC have been approved by the National Guideline Clearinghouse (NGC) and are available at their website. The documented consultation of AUC developed by national medical societies or other "Provider Led Entities (PLEs)" for advanced imaging has been mandated by the U.S. Congress in the Protecting Access to Medicare Act (PAMA) of 2014. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is developing the regulations for the upcoming implementation, anticipated on or before January 1, 2018.

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In order for the use of AUC to be practical, they must be available at the point of care and thus Computerized Decision Support (CDS) tools, available via an Electronic Health Record (EHR) or web-based portal are the optimal delivery mechanism. With this digitally consumable format, you can quickly and easily consult these evidence-based recommendations. This avoids the delays you have been experiencing with prior authorization and ensures high quality imaging care while satisfying the need for utilization management. The ACR, in cooperation with the National Decision Support Company (NDSC), has developed such a CDS system (“ACR Select”) that has been demonstrated in peer reviewed literature to help manage the growth of imaging utilization.

In summary, the American College of Radiology appreciates your desire to be able to deliver high quality care to your patients in a timely and efficient manner and believe that the intrusion of the prior authorization process has significantly disrupted that process. We believe there is a better way and want to:

- a) re-affirm the ACR's enduring support of the application of Appropriate Use Criteria through Computerized Decision Support as a superior means of facilitating value based care and appropriate imaging utilization rather than prior authorization administered via radiology benefits management firms,
- b) remind all Hawaii Medical Association members and other physicians/providers how this tool easily fulfills the requirements of the impending CMS mandate whereby physicians ordering advanced diagnostic imaging exams (CT, MRI, nuclear medicine and PET) for Medicare patients must consult government- approved, evidence-based appropriate-use criteria, and
- c) reiterate that these criteria must be developed or endorsed by national professional medical specialty societies such as the American College of Radiology, American Academy of Family Practice, American College of Cardiology or other Provider Led Entities (PLE) whose focus is the delivery of patient care and which are not an agent of an insurance company.

We look forward to working with the Hawaii Radiological Society and the Hawaii Medical Association to promote the implementation of the use of CDS to allow you to resume providing the care you have been to the population of your beautiful state.

Best regards,



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