

Physician Reviewer Quarterly

Volume 17
April 2011

Evidence-Based Reviews

George Voigtlander, MD, FAAFP, Medical Director

CIMRO of Nebraska offered a physician reviewer workshop in October 2010. At that time, we had received direction from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), that beginning November 1, 2010, QIOs were to include evidence-based information to justify their reviewers' decisions about quality of care. I had encouraged this in past articles, as I believed it would provide education to those being reviewed as well as give credibility to the process.

Several of our physician reviewers gave examples of evidence-based guidelines and sources for more information. These include specialty society's guidelines, almost all of which cite high quality studies to support their recommendation. One such guideline is provided by the Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA). Similar guidelines include those published in *CHEST* every few years concerning appropriate use of anticoagulants. The American Medical Directors Association (AMDA) also publishes clinical practice guidelines that are rigorously evidence-based. An interesting development is that there is an article in the Archives of Internal Medicine, calling into question the evidence basis of the IDSA guidelines. The article claims that many of the studies were not as high quality as they should be. The lead author of the ISDA acknowledged the weakness of some of the studies, but they were the best available. Having guidelines is better than no guidance, but they can't replace critical thinking. With that said, we ask that you critically evaluate the evidence that you cite.

Many of our physician reviewers use *UpToDate*, an evidence-based, peer-reviewed information resource, via the Web and mobile devices. This tool provides the latest findings and recommendations on a wide variety of medical topics.

The Milliman Care Guidelines® offers utilization review guidelines and provides lists of expected activities that should occur during hospitalizations. Milliman is very proud of the extensive bibliography and research they do in providing recommendations that are supported by recent research. CIMRO of Nebraska has partnered with Milliman to offer physician reviewer training in the use of this product. *(Refer to page 2 for more information)*

One of our physician reviewers did an outstanding job of researching whether delay of repair of a hip fracture increases morbidity and mortality. He reviewed several comprehensive studies from the orthopedic literature as well as the *JAMA* (Journal of the American Medical Association). Based on



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research, the conclusion was there is not a statistically significant increase in adverse outcomes. This reviewer admitted he assigned this research to a physician assistant who is younger and more computer literate. Once armed with the evidence, he made a determination that approved of the care. This is an example of something “everyone knows” that, in reality, turns out to be untrue. Researching the literature and resources available is often needed to provide the best determination.

Just before the implementation date of November 1, 2010, CMS reversed its instruction to CIMRO of Nebraska and Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) on evidence-based reviews. The instruction now reads, “the use of evidence-based justification of our quality of care decision is now ‘highly encouraged’, not mandatory”. In addition, CIMRO of Nebraska has received direction from CMS requiring evidence-based justifications for our EMTALA reviews.

My dictionary of *Political Speak inside the Beltway and Its Sphere of Influence** states that ‘highly encouraged’ when used in this context means ‘mandatory’.

The take home message is to provide evidence-based justification for quality of care reviews when available. CIMRO of Nebraska wants to improve care given to the citizens of our state. Providing healthcare providers with feedback and education to improve care is what Stephen Covey calls a “win-win”™. It is good for the patient, the provider and CIMRO of Nebraska. What could be better than everybody coming up a winner? And, the time you spend providing the evidence-based information during the review process is billable to CIMRO of Nebraska on your reimbursement sheet.

* Such a dictionary is entirely apocryphal since it would be so thick, self-contradictory and ephemeral as to be impossible.



QIO Physician Reviewer Training - Milliman Care Guidelines®

Bill Brock, RN, BS, Manager, Case Review/Beneficiary Protection

“Evidence-based medicine is the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients.”

- Sackett D, et al., British Medical Journal/1996; 312:71-2

As mentioned by Dr. Voigtlander in his cover article, CMS “highly encourages” providing evidence-based justifications for quality of care decisions performed by QIOs. We anticipate that this will soon become a mandatory requirement for all QIO quality reviews and improvement activities.

Evidence-based determinations include recommendations based on valid scientific outcomes research, preferably high-quality research that has been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Evidence-based information can be used to develop clinical protocols, pathways, standards of care or clinical practice guidelines and related educational materials.

Although Milliman Care Guidelines® is only one source of evidence-based medical research, CIMRO of Nebraska has partnered with Milliman and is offering a 40-minute Web training session for physician reviewers. The training will provide physician reviewers with an orientation to the evidence in the care guidelines. Physician reviewers will also be provided with an introduction to searching and finding guidelines and specific content. Two visual *Training Job Aid* hand-outs will be provided. Physician reviewers will be compensated for their time spent in training.

If you are interested in completing this training, contact Bill Brock, RN, BS, Manager, Case Review/Beneficiary Protection for details.

Annual Confidentiality Reminder Notice

The CIMRO of Nebraska Board of Directors has mandated an annual reminder notice of confidentiality requirements to emphasize the confidential nature of the services provided by CIMRO of Nebraska.

A Certification and Acceptance statement signed by you is on file at CIMRO of Nebraska regarding your review and acceptance of CIMRO of Nebraska's Confidentiality Policy and awareness of your responsibilities to maintaining strict confidentiality of all Medicare, Medicaid and private review data and information.

This notice serves as a reminder that the Certification and Acceptance statement you previously signed remains in effect. If you are involved in review activities, you are bound by CIMRO of Nebraska's confidentiality policy, related Federal Regulations (HIPAA, 42 CFR 476 – Utilization and Quality Control Review, 42 CFR 480 – Acquisition, Protection and Disclosure of Quality Improvement Organization Information), and state-specific confidentiality regulations, when applicable. You have acknowledged that no non-confidential, de-identified data resulting from activity funded by CIMRO of Nebraska may be published without the prior written consent of CIMRO of Nebraska and compliance with the above referenced regulations. You have also acknowledged responsibilities to maintain strict confidentiality of CIMRO of Nebraska's proprietary information, computer and review programs and technologies, and potential legal liabilities and penalties resulting from a breach in confidentiality.

Please understand that you are conclusively deemed to have ratified your certification and acceptance unless, within ten business days of the date hereof, you withdraw that certification and acceptance by written notice received by CIMRO of Nebraska within that ten-day period.

If you are unable to locate your copy of CIMRO of Nebraska's Confidentiality Policy and would like another copy to review, please call us at (800) 458-4262.



Active Practice Requirements for Physician Reviewers

Physician reviewers must be engaged in active practice in Nebraska. Active practice means the physician usually practices (on a routine basis) a minimum of 20 hours per week. Temporary interruptions of a short-term nature are acceptable as long as the physician clearly has an ongoing, active practice throughout the year and the physician's involvement in the practice averages 20 hours per week during the year. The "routine basis" requirement is met if a physician sees Medicare beneficiaries on an ongoing basis throughout the year, regardless of the total number of contacts with these beneficiaries. Active practice must also include active staff privileges in a healthcare facility, when applicable. Please let us know if your status has changed or is anticipated to change in the near future.

Nebraska Healthcare Quality Forum

CIMRO of Nebraska's eighth annual Quality Forum, an opportunity for sharing, learning and networking as we partner with you and your organization in this journey towards change.

Tuesday, May 10, 2011
Embassy Suites Hotel & Conference Center
La Vista, Nebraska

Visit www.cimronebraska.org/qualityforum.aspx for details and registration.



**Register
Today**

Nebraska Physician Reviewers Needed

Do you know a colleague who may be interested in doing case review for any of the following specialties? If so, have them contact us. Your help is greatly appreciated.

- Orthopedic Medicine/Surgery
- Hospitalists
- Urology
- Interventional Radiology
- Hematology/Oncology
- Vascular Surgery
- Endocrinology
- Thoracic Surgery
- Internal Medicine
- Cardiovascular Surgery
- Gastrointestinal Disease
- Anesthesiology
- Pulmonary Disease
- Cardiology
- Rheumatology
- Plastic Surgery
- Neurosurgery
- Rehabilitation/Physical Medicine

Nebraska physician reviewers must maintain a current, unrestricted Nebraska license and be in active practice with admitting privileges in one or more Nebraska hospital(s). Application packets and job descriptions can be obtained via the CIMRO of Nebraska Web site at www.cimronebraska.org/PhysRev.aspx or by contacting Verdeen Stratton, Beneficiary Protection Assistant, at (800) 458-4262 or (402) 476-1399.

Do I Have a Conflict of Interest?

When you receive a medical record to review for CIMRO of Nebraska, you will notice a form with a red stop sign on top of the record. This is CIMRO of Nebraska's "STOP – Do I have a Conflict of Interest" form. This form was developed as a reminder to physician reviewers that they may not review a case if they have:

- An ownership interest of greater than 5 percent between any affected parties
- A material professional or business relationship
- A direct or indirect financial incentive for a particular determination
- Incentives to promote the use of a certain product or service
- A known familial relationship
- Any prior involvement in the specific case under review

If any potential for a conflict of interest exists, do not take any action on the review. Immediately notify CIMRO of Nebraska at (800) 458-4262.

If you receive a case and perceive a potential conflict of interest, please contact a CIMRO of Nebraska Beneficiary Protection Specialist before proceeding. We will arrange for the case to be reviewed by another physician reviewer. By noting the conflict of interest form and continuing with the review, you are acknowledging that no conflict of interest exists.

PR Reimbursement

It is required that both the PRAF and reimbursement form be signed upon completion of a medical record review. The separate reimbursement form must also include the date you completed the review and the amount of time spent reviewing the case.

PR Quarterly Newsletters Available Online

Visit www.cimronebraska.org/PhysRev.aspx for current and archived issues. If you wish to receive future issues via e-mail, please send your contact information to Verdeen Stratton at vstratton@neqio.sdps.org.



Resources for better healthcare

Telephone: (402) 476-1399
(800) 458-4262
Fax: (402) 476-1335
Web: www.cimronebraska.org

This material was prepared by CIMRO of Nebraska, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for the state of Nebraska, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), a federal agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Contents do not necessarily reflect CMS policy. 9SOW-NE-BP-56/0411