

Sept. 27, 2018

Subject: Obstetrical Ultrasound Prior Authorization Requirement

As a result of provider concerns, Presbyterian Health Plan (PHP) has decided to put a hold on implementing the obstetrical ultrasound prior authorization process. Your partnership is critical and we appreciate the great clinical care you provide every day to your patients, our members. As the largest New Mexico-based health plan, we value you and do our best to listen and be responsive to your feedback.

For several years, PHP has seen consistently high utilization of prenatal ultrasounds in our provider network, especially in comparison to national and regional averages. The use of placental flow Doppler and biophysical profiles are also significantly higher than the national average. When overall utilization of a service is significantly higher than the available utilization data, a health plan's responsibility to our members is to look further into the matter. While we have engaged in provider education around this issue, the high utilization of these services continues to grow.

To address this, PHP developed the prior authorization process and included key features to ease the provider process and administrative burden. That included the following:

- The first two ultrasounds automatically authorized with a simple authorization request.
- Patients with high-risk pregnancy or anomalies are granted authorization for multiple ultrasounds with a single prior authorization request.
- After 50 prior authorization requests, providers with a 95 percent authorization approval rate would be gold-carded and automatically given authorization for future submissions. That would be reassessed at intervals.
- In an emergency, an ultrasound could be performed and the request obtained the next day.

The process provides for initial care, emergency care, multiple exams and a method to bypass pre-authorization altogether based on past utilization. Nonetheless, we are willing to postpone implementation of this process in order to ensure we have addressed your concerns and answered your questions.

If you have any questions, please contact your Provider Network Management relationship executive. You can find his or her information at www.phs.org/ContactGuide.



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