

Progress continues to be made on insurance coverage for psoriasis patients!

With recommendations from the National Psoriasis Foundation, many health plans across the nation have revised their policies to allow better access to treatment for people with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.

- **Geisinger Health Plan, Danville, Penn.**
Psoriasis patients under Geisinger health plan are now required to present with at least ten percent body surface area (BSA) (versus 25 percent previously) in order to qualify for treatment with biologics. Further, those with less than ten percent BSA, but in sensitive areas, can now qualify for biologics as well. Geisinger has further removed the requirement for patients to undergo topical corticosteroids before obtaining systemic treatment.
- **Health Alliance, Urbana, Ill.**
The requirement for patients to present with at least 10 percent BSA before qualifying for biologics was reduced to five percent. People with limited psoriasis but in sensitive areas such as the face, hands or feet may also now qualify. The company also reduced the number of treatments patients need to try before moving on to a biologic from three pre-requisite treatments to two. The Foundation continues to advocate for improved phototherapy policies.
- **Health Net, Inc., nationwide**
Patients whose doctors prescribe psoralen (a light-sensitizing medication) combined with exposure to ultraviolet light A (UVA), also known as "PUVA," can now qualify for this treatment with 10 percent instead of 30 percent body surface coverage. Patients with more limited psoriasis but in sensitive areas such as the hands, feet or face may also now qualify for PUVA. Health Net, Inc. has also removed its requirement for patients to have a diagnosis of psoriasis for at least six months before using biologics.
- **Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Pittsburg, Penn.**
Psoriasis patients in Pennsylvania now have better access to biologic treatments prescribed by their doctors. Patients with less than ten percent psoriasis but in localized and sensitive areas may now qualify. The number of treatments patients are required to try before using biologics has been reduced from two pre-requisite treatments to one. The requirement for patients to provide pictures of their psoriasis has been removed.
- **Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield, Portland, Ore.**
Regence has joined the ranks of insurance companies that have made significant improvements to their medical policies for the treatment of psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis. Last spring, Regence eliminated its requirement that patients must fail topical agents before trying biologics. The company also reduced the number of treatments patients need to try before moving on to a biologic from three pre-requisite treatments to two. Additionally, the policy now allows for those patients with less than 10 percent body surface coverage but in sensitive areas to qualify for biologics. Finally, Regence no longer sequences biologics but treats them all on par with each other.

Next up in health plan policy reform:

Negotiations are underway with several other health plans including:

- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana
- Capitol Blue Cross
- Delaware Physicians Care, Inc.
- Keystone Mercy Health Plan

If you have experience with insurance policies that restrict access to treatments for your patients, please let us know. E-mail a copy of the policy to advocacy@psoriasis.org or fax to 503.245.0626.

National Psoriasis Foundation tackles issue of high phototherapy copayments

The National Psoriasis Foundation recently sent a letter to six different state departments of insurance to address the increasing copayments for psoriasis patients receiving phototherapy treatment.

Based on findings from a survey to 1,100 dermatologists, the letter was sent in early December to insurance commissioners in the following states: California, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Texas and Utah.

You can read the letter, as well as survey findings and responses from insurance commissioners that we have received so far, online at <http://www.psoriasis.org/advocacy/news/articles.php>.

If you have any experiences with your patients opting out of phototherapy treatment due to high co-pays, please contact advocacy@psoriasis.org or call 800.723.9166 x550.

Sincerely yours,



Sheila Rittenberg

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