Clinical Guidelines Program

Development, Communication and Contact Information

Background

Harvard Pilgrim Health Care clinical guidelines are developed through an evidence-based process, which begins with either nationally promulgated guidelines or an extensive review of the published medical literature and utilizes both expert opinion and Harvard Pilgrim practitioner input to develop draft guidelines. The final phase of review consists of commentary and approval of the appropriate cross-regional Clinical Advisory Committee(s), such as Internal Medicine and Cardiology for approval of Cholesterol Guidelines. Guidelines are then reviewed at least every two years and updated to reflect both scientific advances in treatment and practical experience gained from using the guideline. This review process is initiated sooner if emerging evidence warrants. As guidelines are developed or revised, they are communicated to all affiliated practitioners through the Harvard Pilgrim Provider Web site. Written notification is also sent to all affiliated practitioners of the availability of the guidelines.

These clinical guidelines are designed to assist practitioners by providing an analytical framework for the evaluation and treatment of the more common problems of HPHC members. They are not intended either to replace a practitioner's judgment or establish a protocol for all patients with a particular condition. It is understood that some patients will not fit the clinical conditions contemplated by a guideline and that a guideline will not always establish the only appropriate approach to a problem.

Selection of Guideline Topics

The criteria for selecting topics for guideline development includes: conditions that affect a high percentage of the membership population, unexplained variation in clinical practices and utilization, resource considerations in the context of relative efficacy of alternative treatments, risk management issues, introduction of new technology, and/or quality concerns on the part of practitioners and patients.

To date Harvard Pilgrim has adopted and implemented an array of guidelines in the outpatient setting which define best practices in key clinical areas. Harvard Pilgrim's screening and prevention guidelines, a collaborative document developed through the Massachusetts Health Quality Partners, cover the areas of adult medicine, pediatrics, and gynecology. Harvard Pilgrim also has other clinical practice guidelines on various topics related to the following systems: Cardiorespiratory, Endocrine, Gastrointestinal, Mental Health, Musculoskeletal, Obstetrics/Gynecology.

Updating Guidelines

All clinical and preventive care guidelines are reviewed, at least every two years, by the Medical Director, Utilization Management and Clinical Policy (or designee's). Consequent to this review, guidelines may be "reinstated" (for another 2 years), "scheduled for revision" or "retired". In
addition to communicating guideline updates to practitioners, Harvard Pilgrim's Preventive Care Recommendations are also communicated to members through the member newsletter, Your Health.

To Obtain Hard Copies of Guidelines

To obtain an original hard copy of any of Harvard Pilgrim's clinical guidelines, please call the Medical Management department at 617-509-5739.