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AmeriHealth

AmeriHealth's Connections℠ Health Management Program: Announcing Important Enhancements

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Dear Doctor and Office Staff:

AmeriHealth HMO, Inc. and its affiliates (AmeriHealth) are pleased to announce our *enhanced* Connections Health Management Program – a program designed to help you and your patients manage chronic conditions. In addition, this program helps patients make more informed decisions about important medical conditions. **Starting on June 1, 2004, AmeriHealth HMO, PPO, and Medicare members will have access to the *enhanced* Connections Health Management Program.***

Disease Management *and* Decision Support

Our *enhanced* Connections Health Management Program offers **Disease Management** services to patients who have one or more of the following chronic conditions:

- Asthma.
- Coronary Artery Disease (CAD).
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).
- Congestive Heart Failure (CHF).
- Diabetes.

Disease Management is a process that involves identifying and supporting members of a population who have common chronic conditions. Optimal management of these conditions, with a comprehensive and integrated approach to treatment, may be associated with improved health care outcomes. The Connections Health Management Program provides patients with educational materials and personal Health Coaching from trained professionals to help them learn self-care skills and adhere to the treatment plans developed by their physicians. The program also places special emphasis on the importance of managing the co-morbidities that exist in many chronically ill patients.

Decision Support services will be offered to patients facing treatment decisions related to such conditions as back pain, benign uterine bleeding, osteoarthritis, breast and prostate cancer, and coronary artery disease. Decision Support is a process that involves identifying and supporting those members who are facing a treatment option decision, or need help with everyday health concerns. For these conditions, Health Coaches provide objective, evidence-based information to help patients understand their diagnoses, their available treatment options, and the potential benefits and risks of each option, taking into consideration their own preferences. More importantly, they help members work effectively with their physicians to make "shared decisions" that are right for them.

The *enhanced* Connections Health Management Program is provided on a voluntary basis, at no charge to the member.

∗ Please note: Members covered through self-insured employer groups may not be eligible for the program or may have a different start date. Members may call Member Services to verify their eligibility for the Connections Health Management Program. At the time members become eligible for the program, each member will receive a letter inviting him or her to call a Connections Health Coach. In addition, Health Coaches will actively reach out to members with identified clinical needs who may benefit from personal health education and support.

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Health Coaches: *Supporting Your Treatment Plan and Helping Patients to Make Informed Treatment Decisions*

Health Coaches are specially trained health professionals (such as nurses, respiratory therapists, and dieticians) who support patients through ongoing 24-hour a day, 7-day a week telephone interactions. Health Coaches provide Disease Management and Decision Support services along with general health information to help patients understand their diagnoses and symptoms. Health Coaches use nationally recognized information sources such as the Healthwise® Knowledgebase and the National Library of Medicine Databases.

Health Coaches may contact you when necessary to discuss urgent clinical or care coordination issues that arise in their discussions with your patients.

Evidence-Based Clinical Information: *The Basis for Connections℠ Health Management Program Services*

The *enhanced* Connections Health Management Program provides objective, evidence-based information from nationally recognized sources. Clinical evidence is updated annually and when new, relevant clinical information becomes available. All Health Coaching content and patient and provider materials are consistent with this information. Connections Health Management Program Clinical Evidence is available online at *www.amerihealth.com/providers*. Also available via the AmeriHealth web site are "Clinical Insight" documents – summaries for each chronic condition – highlighting the areas that Connections Health Management Program Health Coaches may discuss with your patients.

Keeping Providers Informed and Connected

Primary Care Physicians who have patients with one or more of the chronic diseases in the program will receive a SMART™ Registry claims-based report that summarizes key aspects of care. Look to our *Partners in Health* publications for ongoing program news and features. In addition, a Physician Advisory Group of participating AmeriHealth network physicians will provide clinical input to the program.

We invite you to communicate any feedback or concerns, request individual member information, or refer a patient for Health Coaching by calling the Connections Programs Provider Support Line toll-free at (866) 866-4694. Beginning June 1, 2004, a Connections Provider Service Specialist will return your call within two business days. Connections Health Management Program Provider Service Specialists are available to provide information Monday through Friday, 8:30 A.M. – 5:00 P.M. If you would like to have a Connections Health Management Program representative visit your office to tell you more about the program, please call the same toll-free number listed above.

We look forward to your support as we implement these valuable expanded health management programs.

Sincerely,

Allan B. Goldstein, M.D., F.A.C.P.
Vice President and Regional Medical Director

Esther J. Nash, M.D.
Senior Medical Director
Health Management Programs

Enclosures