

UPMC HEALTH PLAN

One Chatham
Center 112
Washington Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear Valued Provider:

Beginning January 1, 2012, UPMC Health Plan is implementing a comprehensive clinical initiative that focuses on the treatment of chronic low back pain. Effective January 1, surgery for low back pain requires prior authorization to determine medical necessity.

Red flags and exclusionary diagnoses for addressing urgent surgical management of acute back pain are identified in the Surgical Management of Low Back Pain Policy. The policy will be available for review on December 1, 2011, in the online Policy and Procedures Manual located on our website at www.upmchealthplan.com. To be considered for surgery, patients with chronic low back pain must have:

- Tried and failed a 3-month course of conservative management that included chiropractic therapy, physical therapy, and medication.
- Graduated from UPMC Health Plan's Low Back Pain health coaching program. The program includes a Web-based shared decision-making tool to help members understand the pros and cons of surgery and high-tech radiology. Care managers can assist members in obtaining appropriate care. Your patients can call 1-866-778-6073 to enroll.

Appropriate use of high-tech radiology will be monitored for low back pain diagnosis.

We feel strongly that this clinical initiative will improve the quality of care for members who are considering low back surgery, and that it will facilitate their involvement in the decision-making process.

Surgical procedures for low back surgery performed without prior authorization will not be reimbursed at either the specialist or the hospital level. The prior authorization process is as follows:

- Fax clinical information, including a chronology of the conservative measures employed prior to the decision to perform surgery, to the Clinical Operations Department at 412-454-2057.
- Review decisions will be communicated to the requesting provider.
- If you have questions, call Clinical Operations at 1-800-425-7800.

This policy was developed using evidence-based literature and professional society guidelines, as well as the input of external medical professionals with expertise in the area. We look forward to working with you.

Very truly yours,
S. Ramalingam, MD, MBA
Senior Medical Director, Medical Management

The **University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC)** is an \$9 billion integrated global nonprofit health enterprise that has 54,000 employees, 20 hospitals, 4,200 licensed beds, 400 outpatient sites and doctors' offices, a 1.5 million-member health insurance division, as well as commercial and international ventures. UPMC is closely affiliated with its academic partner, the University of Pittsburgh. It is considered a leading American health care provider, as it has been consistently ranked in *US News & World Report* "Honor Roll" of the approximately 15 to 20 best hospitals in America over the last decade. As of 2011, UPMC ranked 12th among the best hospitals in *US News & World Report* and ranked in 15 of 16 specialty areas, including 9 specialties for which UPMC is in the top 10. This does not include the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC which ranked in the top 8 pediatric centers in a separate *US News* ranking.