

9th July, 2024

FAMILY
Allergy & Asthma

THE FAA PULSE

DISCONTINUED ASTHMA MEDICATION SENDS PHILLY-AREA PATIENTS SCRAMBLING, LEADING TO INCREASED ER VISITS

Doctors in the Philadelphia area report a troubling increase in pediatric ICU admissions and asthma-related deaths, partly due to supply issues following the discontinuation of the popular asthma medication Flovent by GSK. This shortage has left many patients, like Jacqueline Vakil's 4-year-old son, struggling to manage their asthma with inadequate alternatives.

Vakil faced a seven-week ordeal, coordinating with doctors, pharmacies, and her insurance company to find a suitable replacement for her son, James, whose severe nighttime coughing left him unable to sleep.

Other patients, like 9-year-old Trey Currie, experienced severe asthma attacks, resulting in ICU admissions when their rescue medications proved insufficient.

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia reports that ICU admissions for pediatric asthma



Newsletter Editor: Winnae Bean
Payor Relations & Enrollment Liaison

FAMILY
Allergy & Asthma

have nearly doubled since before the pandemic, with asthma deaths in the region significantly higher this year.

The shortage stems from new Medicaid price control laws prompting GSK to discontinue Flovent, and pharmacy benefit managers refusing to cover its higher-cost generic version. Efforts are now focused on streamlining access to alternative medications to prevent further complications.


The discontinuation of Flovent has severely impacted asthma care for children in the Philadelphia area, leading to increased ICU admissions and asthma-related deaths. Ensuring timely access to effective medications is crucial for preventing such critical situations and safeguarding children's health.

Key
Takeaway

USEFUL LINKS

- [Read Full Article: Discontinued asthma medication sends Philly-area patients scrambling...](#)

KEY PROVIDER UPDATES

Bringing you essential information from our major payers to keep you well-informed and up to date! To learn more, look for the  icon next to the underlined text links.



[Commercial Medical Policy Updates.](#)


Effective **Jul. 1, 2024**, all Medical Policies and Medical Benefit Drug Policies have been updated with quarterly CPT® and HCPCS code changes. Key updates include:

Respiratory Interleukins (Cinqair®, Fasenra®, & Nucala®) Effective Aug. 1, 2024:

- Clarified that Cinqair for intravenous use is medically necessary under specified criteria.
- Revised severe asthma reauthorization criteria.
- Updated list of National Drug Codes (NDC) for HCPCS code J0517.

Xolair® (Omalizumab) Effective Aug. 1, 2024:

- Revised criteria for patients with IgE-mediated food allergy, broadening the eligible diagnosis.
- Added ICD-10 diagnosis code Z91.013.


 [EZ Claim Pay available in additional states, starting July 1.](#) UnitedHealthcare (UHC) is expanding EZ Claim Pay to 15 more states, including **Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee**, joining the previously announced states like Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Ohio. EZ Claim Pay allows members to have UHC pay their Medicare Part B deductible for eligible claims, simplifying budgeting and payment for care and speeding up the process of members' out-of-pocket costs reaching providers.



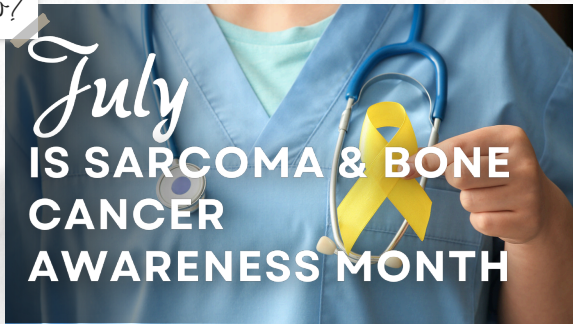
[Annual federal audit of commercial plans.](#)

Heads Up: Beginning this month, UHC providers in commercial plans may be randomly selected for the HHS annual RADV audit. Selected providers will need to submit medical documentation for members' 2023 services, such as medication lists and office visit notes. **Datavant** (formerly CIOX Health) will manage the medical records requests, ensuring HIPAA compliance and clear documentation of patient details.



 [Payment Policy Updates: Pulmonary Function Testing.](#) Buckeye Health's Payment Policy Updates, effective **Aug. 1, 2024**, now include expanded ICD-10 codes for Pulmonary Function Testing (CP.MP.242). Added codes such as J15.61, J15.69, J44.81, J44.89, J4A.0, J4A.8, and J4A.9 facilitate broader reimbursement, covering conditions like pneumonia due to specific bacteria and chronic lung allograft dysfunction. These changes, excluding bronchoprovocation testing, enhance coverage for Medicaid and Marketplace services, ensuring comprehensive access to essential respiratory diagnostics.

Did you know?



[Learn how you can become an advocate for cancer research, participate in events to raise awareness, and volunteer your time.](#)



Unit Limits Reminder. Aetna would like to remind providers that the company applies most unit limitations recommended by Medicare, with occasional exceptions. This includes customizing unit allowances, such as transitioning from daily or monthly limits to 90-day periods. Detailed information and exceptions can be accessed through Aetna's provider portal on Availity®.



Clinical Criteria Updates. Effective **July 6, 2024**, Anthem's Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committee revised the Clinical Criteria for Xolair (omalizumab), CC-0033, impacting its medical drug benefit. This revision reflects changes to medical necessity requirements aimed at enhancing clinical coding edits and ensuring effective utilization of Xolair within Anthem's coverage framework.

Drugs and Biologic Notification. Anthem is enhancing its claims editing system effective **Oct. 1, 2024**, to ensure claims with pharmaceutical drug procedure codes include the appropriate FDA-approved indicators. These edits aim to assess drug quality and effectiveness, with potential denials for incorrect billing. Providers can dispute decisions via standard procedures, including submitting pertinent medical records.



Medical Specialty Injectable Policies Updates. Effective **Aug. 1, 2024**, Capital Blue Cross is updating its medical specialty policies (Commercial only) to be more medication-specific, including changes to clinical criteria and formatting, affecting drugs such as **Xolair®**. Providers requiring prior authorization should use the Availity online portal by navigating to Payer Spaces > Capital Blue Cross > Resources > Provider Library > Preauthorization and Policies > Medical Injectable Provider Notifications. For detailed information on the updated Xolair® policy and other drug policies, please review the documentation.



Commercial and Other Pharmacy Program Updates. Effective **July 1, 2024**, Florida Blue has updated its pharmacy programs, including changes to preferred drug lists, medication guides, and prior authorization requirements. Specifically, **Xolair SQ auto-injector's FDA-approved indication(s)** will now require prior authorization under the Prior Authorization Program.



Pharmacy Update. Here's what providers need to know about Wellcare pharmacy benefits: Express Scripts Pharmacy® is Wellcare's preferred mail order provider, replacing CVS Caremark®. CVS Caremark Mail Order® is out-of-network in 2024.

If you enjoyed this edition, have feedback or comments, please feel free to share them with the editor at wbean@familyallergy.com. Your input is invaluable to us!

