WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD GETS SICK

(Emergency Room Utilization Reduction Project)

Molina Healthcare of Michigan
Health Care Program: Medicaid

Introduction

Children under the age of 24 months are among Molina Healthcare of Michigan’s highest emergency room (ER) utilizers. Review of claims reveal the majority of these visits are for minor conditions such as fever, earaches and colds. In an effort to reduce ER utilization, Molina has designed a new program, titled What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick to encourage parents to seek treatment in a more appropriate setting.

Program Description

Members (10,000) with children < 24 months of age were surveyed (Pre-Survey) in June 2004, interventions were implemented and members responding to the original survey (1014) were resurveyed (Post-Survey) in January 2005.

Member Interventions (English and Spanish)

- Member Surveys
- What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick book (mailed 14,000 in 2004 to members < 24 months; mailed monthly to 8 month olds in 2005 and 2006)
- Reminder to use health book (60 days after book mailing)
- Instructions on when to use ER vs. Urgent Care
- Instructions on following up with PCP after ER visit
- Refrigerator magnet to post phone number for PCP and local urgent care site
- List of local urgent care sites with office hours (member newsletter insert)
- Nurse Advice Line Magnet and information on how to use the service

PCP Interventions

- Letter explaining the program to all PCP sites
- What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick book for office use

Pre/Post Survey Results

Initially 81% of members stated they did not have a health book to consult when their child was sick or injured. The post-survey responses showed that 82% used the health book supplied by Molina at least once when their child was sick or injured. (See Chart 1) When asked “What would you do if your child was sick and couldn’t be seen by the PCP the same day?” parents stating they would “Seek care in the ER” decreased by 14.6 percentage points, “Wait for the next available MD visit” increased by 2.9 percentage points, “Treat at home” increased by 9.6 percentage points and “Seek care at an urgent care site” increase by 2.2 percentage points. (See Chart 2) Parents indicated increased confidence levels for caring for a child with fever (+ 8.8%), vomiting (+8.3%), diarrhea (+7.7%) and runny nose/coughs (+6.9%) but confidence levels
decreased when caring for children with earache (-4.2%). (See Chart 3) Additionally 82.6% of parents reported that the book was either Helpful or Very Helpful.

**Conclusion**
Parental response indicates they benefited from the program. Current interventions will continue through 2006. Additionally, diagnosis specific information to be sent to parents of frequent ER utilizers. Also, interventions in 2006 will focus on counties with the highest ER costs. Interventions in SE Michigan will continue to discourage inappropriate ER use despite hospital advertisements of 29 minute wait times.

Review of ER cost one year into the program (Q3 2005) shows a decrease in ER costs for children < 2 years but an increase in children at age 2. (See Chart 4) The Q4 2005 data is not complete and final results are pending.

**Chart 1**

*How often did you use the What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick book before calling the doctor during 2004?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>17.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 4 times</td>
<td>26.27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 2**

*What would you do if your child was sick and couldn’t be seen by the PCP the same day?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Post Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ER</td>
<td>24.17%</td>
<td>9.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Doctor’s Appt.</td>
<td>25.83%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat at Home</td>
<td>28.70%</td>
<td>29.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent Care</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>32.17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 3

“How confident are you when caring for your child when he or she has the following problems?"

Response: Very Confident/Confident

Chart 4

ER Paid Claims PMPM

Paid PMPM

$30.00

$25.00

$20.00

$15.00

$10.00

$5.00

$-


Quarter

Program Implementation 1 year later

Legend:

- Age 0
- Age 1
- Age 2
What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick

(Medicaid)

Molina Healthcare of Michigan
Health Care Program: Medicaid

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