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We hope you enjoy the fall edition of Practice Matters. In this issue, you can read about support for language services, efforts to reduce health disparities, and much more.
Important information for health care professionals and facilities

Support for Language Services

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan serves a diverse group of members who have a variety of cultural and language needs. UnitedHealthcare supports care providers in providing competent cultural and language services to its members in a variety of ways.

Here’s what care providers need to know:

- Although the predominant languages spoken by our Maryland members are English and Spanish, we have a significant Vietnamese population.
- We provide language assistance to help you communicate with our members that includes a telephone language line, in-person interpreters and video services.
- We have tools to promote cultural awareness and assist care providers in recognizing and treating health disparities.
- Resources and tools are available at UHCCommunityPlan.com/health-professionals/md/cultural-competency-library.html.
  - A Quick Reference Guide – Understanding Cultural Competency and the Americans with Disabilities Act
  - Cross Cultural Health Care Program
  - Cultural Orientation Resource Center

For more information on how to get language assistance and interpreter services, call 877-842-3210.

Chlamydia: What Your Patients Need to Know

Do your patients know how important it is to be tested for Chlamydia? Care providers are essential to help prevent it in women and their partners.

Identifying any cultural or socio-economic barriers may provide answers about why some patients are resistant to testing or being treated. Understanding how this infection is viewed among patients may help determine the course of action. We encourage care providers to help patients work through the cultural or social connotations so they can get the right testing and treatment.


Our Commitment to Addressing Health Disparities

According to the National Institutes of Health, health disparities are differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups in the United States. In May 2010, our commitment to addressing health disparities was strengthened by founding the Health Equity Services Program. This program includes UnitedHealthcare Commercial, Medicare and Medicaid leaders from our clinical, network, operations, data and informatics, customer service and marketing departments. The program is intended to foster a holistic approach to reduce health disparities and enhance the member experience.
The main goals of this program are:

• Reduce health disparities to improve the quality of health for patients and communities.

• Embrace diversity by creating a continuum of culturally sensitive initiatives that promote health and prevent avoidable health care costs.

Program priorities include:

• Establishing the foundation for multicultural population stratification

• Understanding gaps in health to develop interventions

• Refining the patient-centered approach based on member demographics, including race, ethnicity and language preferences

• Growing multicultural capabilities to enhance the member experience

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan in Maryland will enhance its ability to offer culturally competent care management programs and services. Our specific efforts to acknowledge and support the impact culturally competent care has on improving health outcomes in Maryland include:

**Analytics** – Integrating member age, gender, address, race/ethnicity and language data with clinical data to identify any disparities in care associated with member demographics

**Cultural Competence** – Providing clinical and non-clinical cultural competency training to staff to create an awareness of the unique needs of members from various cultures to improve delivery of more personalized service

**Outreach** – Customizing member materials and engagement strategies based on identified unique cultural needs and gaps in care

**Providers** – Fostering culturally competent care by care providers

The clinical performance measures selected to address specific health disparities in two counties based on health data are pre- and post-natal care, lead screening for children and adolescent well visits. The goal is to use varying methods to help ensure members receive their needed care to improve health outcomes.

UnitedHealthcare is committed to reducing health disparities through our continuous work to identify, address and monitor health disparities associated with age, gender, address, race and ethnicity, language and disability.

**Helping Members Connect the Dots**

As a care provider, you routinely offer your patient several ways to prevent illness including, but not limited to, recommendations to:

• Keep annual preventive visits

• Take medications as prescribed

• Obtain specific screening tests

• Start exercising

• Stop smoking

But some patients may not correlate these recommendations with prevention of illness. They may fear asking questions or not be sure what to ask. They also may not realize these recommendations are directly related to your goal for them to achieve better health outcomes.
Important information for health care professionals and facilities

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You can be your patient’s advocate by asking and answering these three questions before they ask them. Doing so may help open the conversation, increase their comfort level and help them better understand the reason for your recommendations.

The three core questions are:

- What is my problem?
- What do I need to do?
- Why is it important to do this?

For more information on this national campaign, visit npsf.org/?page=askme3.

Ethnicity and Chronic High Blood Pressure

Cultural practices can play an important part in how patients acknowledge and treat their chronic blood pressure condition. Their food choices, exercise patterns, attitudes toward medications or alternative medications and treatments, and socioeconomic factors all contribute to their health care decisions.

Care providers can play an important role by understanding a patient’s cultural and medical needs. Opening the door for conversations about their beliefs or practices relating to management of their blood pressure allows for individualizing their treatment plan, which supports adherence to that plan. Getting a family history provides added information into how patients may feel about their condition and their ability or willingness to adhere to their prescribed treatment.

Cultural awareness and sensitivity helps care providers understand the whole person as they see themselves and their condition. For more information from our Cultural Competency Library, visit UHCCommunityPlan.com > For Health Care Professionals > Maryland > Cultural Competency Library.

Additional information is available from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health at minorityhealth.hhs.gov.

Maryland Department of Health Name Change

On July 1, 2017, the Maryland Departments of Health and Department of Mental Hygiene changed its name to the Maryland Department of Health. The new name reflects the increased number of programs the department oversees. The agency has four major divisions: Public Health Services; Behavioral Health; Developmental Disabilities; and Health Care Financing.

To learn more about the department, visit health.maryland.gov.
Practice Matters is a quarterly publication for physicians and other health care professionals and facilities in the UnitedHealthcare network.