

April 17, 2017

National Dental Director
Anthem, Inc.
3560 Delta Dental Drive
Eagan, Minnesota 55122

Dear Doctor:

We are writing to express our dissatisfaction with Anthem's policy to restrict patient benefits based solely on the type of practitioner (i.e., primary vs. specialist) for certain dental services within the Empire BCBS dental HMO plan.

We note that some of the procedures that are not referable by a primary care dentist include among others, apicoectomies and certain root canals.

We would like to share the following section from the American Dental Association's Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct.

III. PRINCIPLES, CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND ADVISORY OPINIONS

Section 2 PRINCIPLE: NONMALEFICENCE ("do no harm"). The dentist has a duty to refrain from harming the patient.

This principle expresses the concept that professionals have a duty to protect the patient from harm. Under this principle, the dentist's primary obligations include keeping knowledge and skills current, knowing one's own limitations and when to refer to a specialist or other professional, and knowing when and under what circumstances delegation of patient care to auxiliaries is appropriate.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

2. B. CONSULTATION AND REFERRAL

Dentists shall be obliged to seek consultation, if possible, whenever the welfare of patients will be safeguarded or advanced by utilizing those who have special skills, knowledge, and experience.

In your email response to our initial inquiry, you mention that this is a cost control measure and that under the terms of the plan, certain procedures cannot be covered when not performed by the general dentist. This policy interferes in the dentist-patient relationship, unilaterally removes the doctor's expertise and judgment as the deciding factor for referral to a specialist, and potentially places the patient at risk of harm, with no reason other than it will save the company money.

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On behalf of the Council on Dental Benefit Programs, we ask that you rescind this policy based on the information provided in this letter. If you would like to discuss this over a phone call, please contact Dr. Krishna Aravamudhan, Director, Center for Dental Benefits, Coding and Quality at 800-621-8099 extension 2772.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald D. Riggins", written over a horizontal line.

Ronald D. Riggins, D.M.D.
Chair, Council on Dental Benefit Programs

RR:dm

cc: Dr. Dave Preble, vice president, Practice Institute
Dr. Krishna Aravamudhan, director, Center for Dental Benefits, Coding and Quality
Members, Council on Dental Benefit Programs