



# NovaHealth

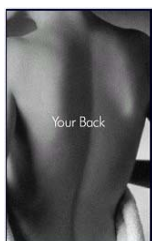


## NEWSLETTER

First Quarter 2002

*NovaHealth is an Independent Practice Association established to ensure that participating providers have the economic freedom to focus on improving their patients' health status and to partner with patients to manage care.*

### QUALITY INITIATIVES



## Low Back Pain Project

First Quarter Data

*Can Quality Initiatives Impact Access, Quality or Cost?*

The initial LBP data (a comparison of a rolling 12 month period ending 12/31/00, 7/31/01 and 12/31/01) shows progress toward the aims of the project. Meritus, our data analysis consultants, has aggregated the Nova Member claims data from Cigna, Aetna, Anthem, HPHC and Maine Partners to establish a pre-project benchmark and to measure change overtime. The first quarter report shows the following:

- < MRI Utilization pmpm and per LBP case
- < MRI cost pmpm and per LBP case
- < X-Ray Utilization pmpm per LBP case
- < X-Ray cost pmpm per LBP case

The 2002 physician survey showed the following improvement from the 2001 survey:

- Improved ease of scheduling neurosurgical consults
- Improved access to MRI services

- Greater utilization of LBP patient education materials
- Continued difficulty with access to appropriate pain management services

The surveys also contained favorable feedback relative to access to the Spine Center and satisfaction with the services provided by the Spine Center.

Thanks to those who provided specific feedback. The details help us to continually improve the process.

## LBP Exercise Handouts

In response to requests from our physicians, the Low Back Pain Task Force has developed a set of patient handouts including the following:

- Managing Acute Back Pain: Information, Stretches and Exercises
- Intermediate Exercises for the Restoration Phase
- Advanced Exercises for the Maintenance Phase

Information about the content and use of the handouts will be presented at a physician meeting. The handouts will fit in the back pocket of the newly formatted low back pain brochure.

We are developing a process for addressing back pain as a chronic condition, emphasizing the importance of self-management, in order to decrease the instances of recurrent acute back pain. Also included in the materials is information regarding posture, body mechanics and other factors that aggravate low back pain.

Thanks to John Pier and Paul Simenson for their help in developing these handouts.

## **MHMC Informing Patients and Rewarding Practitioners Project**

The Maine Health Management Coalition has spoken in the past about value based purchasing. They have now developed a Steering Group, which includes our co-Medical Directors Mike Albaum, MD and Tom Claffey, MD, to develop a patient and employer information report. The report is intended to help patients make informed choices as to providers and to allow healthcare purchasers to develop a method of rewarding high value providers.

### **NETWORK DEVELOPMENT**

## **Neurosurgery and Spine Associates**

(Previously Maine Neurosurgery and the Spine Center)

Vincent Herzog, D.O. has joined Neurosurgery and Spine Associates of Maine. He completed training in Physiatry at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago. He is Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Electrodiagnostic Medicine (EMG). He has been practicing in the Portland area since 1993. Dr. Herzog is part of the Nova preferred network of spine care providers and will be

working closely with John Pier, MD. His intended start date at Neurosurgery and Spine Associates is April 23, 2002.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

#### **HPHConnect**

Harvard Pilgrim HealthCare has introduced a new web-based transaction service called HPHConnect. Participating Harvard Providers now have online access to claims status, patient eligibility and copay verification, PCP membership and LCU financial and utilization reporting, plan notification and referral/precert processing, and HPHC News and Information. As one Nova Billing Rep put it: "... I used the web site today for two of my ... precerts and found it to be a breeze. It is an awesome website and user friendly."

#### **WebMD**

Aetna also offers online access to eligibility verification, claims status, referral/precert submission and referral status inquiry through the WebMD Office Product. A Nova Referral Coordinator recently commented that it is "simple and user friendly, provides instant feedback and allows you to build your own practice-specific database."

#### **MedUnite**

Cigna hopes to offer similar online services through MedUnite in July of this year.

**Take a Look At Our Website:**  
**[nova-health.org](http://nova-health.org)**

**The site includes patient education materials, clinical pathways, contact information and links to participating provider sites.**

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