



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Q. Who is American Imaging Management® (AIM®)?

A. American Imaging Management, Inc. (AIM) is a diagnostic imaging management company that has worked with leading health plans across the United States to promote appropriate use of advanced diagnostic imaging services through the use of widely accepted clinical content and advanced analytical capabilities. AIM programs interact with providers all across the United States. In provider satisfaction surveys, AIM has consistently achieved scores above 90% through a commitment to providing excellent service and market leading Web capabilities.

Q. Why is Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska implementing the RQI Program?

A. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska developed the RQI Program to promote the most appropriate use of advanced imaging services provided to members. The program aligns with the goals of the Nebraska Health Care Reform Task Force – to promote high quality, affordable health care coverage and utilize best practices and practice guidelines to help reduce unnecessary medical expense.

Q. Why is Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska focusing on advanced diagnostic imaging?

A: Advanced imaging is one of the fastest growing clinical services in health care, increasing at an annual rate of 10% to 20% a year nationally.¹ While the rapidly improving technology and clinical application of these services are the leading drivers of growth, it is widely accepted in the medical community that a significant proportion of the services that are performed today are clinically unnecessary.

Given the potentially negative clinical implications of unnecessary testing, such as exposure to high doses of ionizing radiation, false positives, as well as the high costs of these tests, BCBSNE is implementing the RQI Program to promote the appropriate use of advanced imaging services.

Q. What are the goals of the RQI Program?

A. BCBSNE has the following goals for this program:

- Promoting the selection of the most clinically appropriate diagnostic imaging services based on a patient's clinical needs
- Encouraging standardization of medical practice patterns and reducing variation in clinical evaluation through provider education and collaboration
- Curtailing the utilization of inappropriate advanced diagnostic imaging studies
- Advocating bio-safety issues, including reduction of unnecessary radiation exposure
- Enhancing quality of healthcare for diagnostic imaging studies using evidence-based medicine and outcomes research from numerous resources

¹ Data based on AIM health plan client utilization data

BCBSNE's RQI Program is built on AIM's Clinical Guidelines which are designed to promote the appropriate use of advanced diagnostic imaging services based on widely accepted clinical opinion. AIM's clinical guidelines are consistent with BCBSNE medical policy.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND REQUIREMENTS

Q. What are the requirements for this program?

- A. Ordering/referring non-radiology providers must contact AIM (via the Web or through the call center) to obtain an order number before scheduling elective outpatient high tech diagnostic imaging services. In addition, radiology providers/free standing imaging centers should confirm (via the Web or through the call center) that an order number has been obtained prior to service delivery. Radiology providers/free standing imaging centers are restricted from obtaining the order number on behalf of the ordering provider.

Q. When will this program begin?

- A. Beginning February 8, 2010, AIM's call center and Web site, *ProviderPortal*SM, will be available for submission of order requests for imaging services occurring on or after March 1, 2010.

Q. What types of diagnostic imaging exams are included under this program?

- A. The RQI Program includes outpatient elective CT scans (excluding CCTA), MRI, MRA, MRM, MRS, PET scans, fMRI and Nuclear Cardiology studies.

Q. What types of diagnostic imaging exams are excluded?

- A. All other imaging services and imaging services provided in conjunction with emergency room visits, inpatient hospitalization, outpatient surgeries (hospital or freestanding surgery centers), or 23-hour observation are excluded from the program and do not require an order number.

Please note: CCTA, Oncologic PET, CT Colonography, and EBCT will continue to be reviewed by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska using existing preauthorization requirements and processes.

Q. How does a physician office staff member obtain an order number from AIM?

- A. There are two ways to obtain an order number for diagnostic imaging services:
- By registering at AIM's Web site: www.americanimaging.net/goweb. After registration, a provider can follow the easy-to-use online process to request an order number through *ProviderPortal* – AIM's interactive Internet application.
 - By calling AIM at **1-866-745-3265**.

Q. What information is not required for submission when requesting an order from AIM?

- A. CPT or diagnosis codes are not required when requesting an order number. Also, it is not necessary to fax any medical records.

Q. How does the RQI Program work?

- A. Ordering physician offices submit order requests through **ProviderPortal** – AIM's interactive Internet application - or through the AIM Call Center. Web users or callers will be guided through an interview where member and ordering physician information (name, member ID number, etc), diagnosis, symptoms, exam type, and treatment/clinical history is requested.

If the information provided meets AIM's clinical criteria and is consistent with BCBSNE medical policy (when applicable), the Web user/caller will then be guided to select an imaging provider where the imaging study will be performed, and an order number will be issued.

If all criteria are not met and additional information or review is needed, the case is forwarded to a Registered Nurse (RN) who uses additional clinical experience and knowledge to evaluate the request against clinical guidelines. The nurse reviewer has the authority to issue order numbers in the event that he or she is able to ensure that the request is consistent with AIM's clinical criteria and BCBSNE medical policy, when applicable.

If an order number still cannot be issued by the nurse reviewer, the case is forwarded to an AIM Physician Reviewer (MD), who contacts the ordering physician directly to discuss the case and diagnostic imaging guidelines prior to issuing the order number. AIM's Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Guidelines serve as a foundation for this collegial discussion. These Guidelines are available for download on AIM's Web site, www.americanimaging.net.

The Physician Reviewer will issue an order number based on a review of information collected and/or through their discussion with the ordering physician. If the request does not meet AIM's Clinical Guidelines, the request will be recorded as having received an order number without meeting clinical criteria.

Please note that order requests for Cardiac MRI and MRI of the Breast that have been reviewed by AIM and do not meet BCBSNE medical policy will be redirected back to BCBSNE for further review. The claim may be denied if BCBSNE determines the service to be inconsistent with BCBSNE medical policy after this review.

Q. How long is the order number valid?

- A. Order numbers are valid for sixty (60) calendar days after the date of issue.

Q. Does AIM need to know when the procedure is scheduled?

- A. No, however the order number must be issued **prior to scheduling** the study. Order numbers are valid for sixty (60) calendar days from the date of issuance.

Q. Which members are included in the RQI Program?

- A. The RQI Program includes all BCBSNE members enrolled in the following products: Traditional, PPO, and CHIP (Comprehensive Health Insurance Plan).

Please contact BCBSNE if you need additional information regarding products covered under the program.

Q. Which members are not included in the RQI Program?

A. The RQI Program does not include the following members:

- Medicare Supplement
- Medicare Advantage
- Medicaid
- FEP (will be added in 2011)
- BlueCard/out-of-state BCBS Members (please note that compliance with other BCBS plans' imaging management programs must still be fulfilled for these members)
- Members with BCBSNE Secondary Coverage

Q. Will members be able to contact AIM?

A. Members should contact BCBSNE or their benefits administrator directly if they have any questions about the RQI Program.

Q. What is the imaging providers' role in the RQI Program?

A: Imaging providers are strongly encouraged to verify that an order number has been obtained prior to scheduling the study. If an order number is not obtained, the facility may experience claims and non-compliance reporting impact.

Q. Can providers obtain order numbers on a retrospective basis?

A. No, providers must follow the process to obtain order numbers prior to performing diagnostic imaging services under this program. For those rare requests that are medically urgent, providers should contact AIM, online or through the AIM Call Center, within two business days of performing the exam. This also includes add-on exams.

Q. Are any physicians exempt from participating in this program?

A. All ordering/referring physicians and imaging providers/facilities contracting with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska are required to comply with the RQI Program.

Q. I am a hospital-based imaging provider. Does this program apply to me?

A. Non-radiology specialists will be required to request an order number for outpatient elective advanced imaging services regardless of their affiliation with a facility or practice. Inpatient diagnostic imaging is not included in this program. Hospital-based radiologists who only provide professional services are not required to participate in the RQI Program.

Q. I have radiology equipment in my office. Will I be able to perform diagnostic exams in the office and will I be required to obtain an order number to perform CTs, MRs, Nuclear Cardiology exams, and PETs?

A. An order number is required to perform any elective, outpatient advanced diagnostic service, even for ordering physicians with their own imaging equipment. Contact AIM and request an order number for imaging studies to be performed at your office or facility.

Q. What online services does AIM offer? How do providers contact AIM after-hours?

A. **ProviderPortal** - AIM's interactive internet application – is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and helps ordering physicians and staff quickly and efficiently submit and verify order requests for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska members at any time via the Web.

Q. How can I register for the program?

A. To register for the program, go to www.americanimaging.net/goweb and enter the following PIN: 197-83169. Pre-registration, with expedited account approval is available online February 8-March 12. If you register after March 12, the standard registration process will apply.

Q. How long does it take to obtain a user password after registering on AIM's Web site?

A. Beginning February 8, 2010, if an e-mail address is provided during the registration process, the password will be sent within 24-48 hours of completion of the registration.

Q. Is the ordering physician required to obtain an order number for an urgent case and how does he or she do this in the evening and on weekends?

A. Emergency room services do not require an order number. Outpatient elective diagnostic imaging services are typically non-urgent in nature. For those rare requests that are medically urgent, providers should contact AIM, online or through the AIM Call Center, within two business days of performing the exam.

Q. Is the issuance of an order number a guarantee of claim payment?

A. No, the claim will be processed in accordance with the terms of a member's health care benefit plan.

Q. Does an order number have to be submitted with a claim?

A. No, order numbers are not required with the submission of claims.

STANDARDS FOR IMAGING GUIDELINES

Q. Who develops the clinical criteria for the program?

A. AIM's Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Guidelines are updated at least once a year and are reviewed by:

- An independent Physician Review Board, including cardiologists, orthopedic surgeons, radiologists, neurologists, and neurosurgeons
- Client Medical Directors
- Local Imaging Advisory Council (representing local physician communities)
- Physician Review Panels

In addition, AIM's guidelines are submitted as part of AIM's accreditation process to the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) and the American Accreditation HealthCare Commission (URAC).

Q. What methods and resources are used to develop the guidelines?

A. Development of AIM's Clinical Guidelines involves integration of medical information from multiple sources to support the use of high quality and state-of-the-art diagnostic imaging services. The process for criteria development is based on technology assessment, peer-reviewed medical literature, including clinical outcomes research, and consensus opinion in medical practice.

The primary resources used for AIM's Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Guidelines development include:

- American College of Radiology (ACR) Appropriateness Criteria
- American College of Cardiology (ACC) Appropriateness Criteria
- American Heart Association (AHA)
- American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM)
- American Cancer Society
- American Academy of Neurology (AAN)
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
- Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR)
- Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- National Guideline Clearinghouse

Q. Where are these clinical guidelines available?

A. The guidelines are available for download on AIM's Web site at www.americanimaging.net.