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June 11, 2009

Memo: 059.09

To: Idaho Physicians

From: Suzan Belzer, IMA Reimbursement Program Director

Subject: Update on Idaho Immunization Program

Attached is the Idaho Immunization Program notice received late yesterday related to Idaho's transition to a Vaccine for Children (VFC)-only state on July 1, 2009.

The notice provides information related to insurers partnering with the state to create a purchase cooperative. Blue Cross of Idaho (BCI) is, at the current time, the only insurer that has agreed to participate. Other insurers may choose to participate during the interim starting on July 1 until a more permanent solution can be addressed legislatively.

Note that for VFC and BCI patients, the claims submission process will remain unchanged. However, also note that BCI is working to address how to apply the purchase cooperative to Blue Card members. We expect Blue Cross will be providing additional information in the coming weeks. Note also that the notice indicates there will be a gap for patients with BCI insurance coverage. The gap is a result of the state process associated with the bid process.

The IMA has not promoted the private purchase of vaccines and is troubled by the tone of the DHW memo that indicates physicians will need to privately purchase vaccines. In addition, the decision by other insurers to not participate in the purchasing cooperative is disappointing. The IMA, physician staff representatives, pediatricians, and family practice physicians have lobbied hard to avoid the need for physicians to privately purchase vaccines. **We are continuing to work on this approach and will provide another update on our efforts to involve hospitals in a solution.**

IMA has had extensive communication with physician practices related to the private

purchase of vaccines for immunization of non-VFC eligible and non- BCI insured. Several offices indicate that non-VFC and non-BCI insured will be referred out for vaccinations since the practice would be too encumbered administratively to accommodate a two-vaccine supply burden.

As a last resort, I have been in contact with several purchasing cooperatives that require endorsement or sanction by medical societies, thus allowing individual physicians to purchase vaccines at reduced rates. The downside to these cooperatives is that they are tied to specific pharmaceutical companies, e.g. Sanofi and Merck and not GlaxoSmithKline.

In April the IMA Board voted to allow the Board to review requests for IMA business partnerships and decide whether the IMA should partner with the entity. In this vein, it is imperative that you contact me to provide direction as to whether you wish for the partnership requests to move forward to the Board. The next Board meeting is July 23, 2009; however, based on your input, IMA CEO Susie Pouliot has indicated she will call a special session of the Executive Committee to review the partnership proposals should physicians need this to happen more expeditiously.

If a business partnership is an option, the IMA may be able to only partner with one purchase cooperative. It will be necessary to communicate what pharmaceutical companies are preferred for vaccine purchase. An underlying consideration is to also see what pharmaceutical companies receive the state purchase cooperative bid and then identify a cooperative that aligns with the same pharmaceutical companies, thus lessening the administrative burden of vaccine maintenance.

Please email me at sbelzer@idmed.org to apprise me of the need to move forward with a proposal to the IMA Board of Trustees for establishing a business partnership with a separate purchasing cooperative. In the subject line, please state Vaccine Partnership.

The IMA will continue to work with those insurers that opted out of the state purchase cooperative to encourage their participation. In addition, there will be a resolution introduced at the July House of Delegates meeting to further address the need for legislative action.

If you have any other questions, feel free to email or call me.

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