

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation
DIVISION OF INSURANCE

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COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE

BULLETIN 2022-06

To: All Commercial Insurers, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Inc.,
and Health Maintenance Organizations

From: Gary D. Anderson, Commissioner of Insurance 

Date: June 14, 2022

Re: Easing of Prior Authorization for Certain Types of Imaging in Response to Severe Supply
Chain Disruptions

The Division of Insurance (“Division”) issues this Bulletin 2022-06 to Commercial Health Insurers, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Inc., and Health Maintenance Organizations to identify the Division’s expectations regarding the need to relax prior authorization for certain imaging services due to temporary shortages of iohexol and iodixanol contrast media products used for computed tomography (“CT”) scans.

Formulations of iohexol and iodixanol contrast media products are manufactured in a facility in Shanghai, China, which has been under COVID-19 lockdown. Production has recently resumed; however, a reduction in supplies is expected to continue for the immediate future. This reduction means that patients in need of CT scans are being forced to postpone procedures or switch to alternative imaging.

Flexibility in Health Carrier Administrative Processes

The American College of Radiology has indicated that appropriate approaches to this shortage may include utilizing alternative versions of contrast agents, considering non-contrast CT scans in appropriate situations, utilizing weight-based dosing for CT, or using alternative imaging modalities when under normal circumstances a CT scan would be the appropriate modality.

In order to make sure insureds can receive timely imaging to address their care needs, the Division expects health carriers, for the 60 days following the issuance of this Bulletin, to work with health

care facilities to ease prior authorization requirements for the use of alternate imaging modalities and contrast agents in clinically appropriate circumstances, and to increase flexibility around the use of contrast materials in CT scans when a member is unable to receive a medically necessary CT scan with iohexol and iodixanol contrast media as a result of the shortage.

Carriers Acting As Administrators

When Carriers are acting as administrators for employment-sponsored non-insured health benefit plans, the Division expects Carriers to encourage plan sponsors to take steps that are consistent with the provisions of this Bulletin 2022-06. Plan sponsors should be made aware of the exigent circumstances, and Carriers should do all they can to encourage plan sponsors to take steps to provide the administrative relief set forth herein for the period lasting for 60 days following the issuance of this Bulletin.

If you have any questions about this Bulletin, please contact Kevin Beagan, Deputy Commissioner for the Health Care Access Bureau, at (617) 521-7323.