PREMERA | BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF ALASKA

AIM American Imaging Management

# Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative

Vendor Introduction - Frequently Asked Questions

## Program Overview

1)

**Q. Why did Premera implement the Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative?**

A. Premera implemented the Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative as part of a commitment it has made to partner with physicians to improve quality, reduce variation in care, and manage healthcare costs. Advanced imaging represents one of the fastest growing areas of healthcare costs today. We are launching this initiative to support improved quality and reduced variation in advanced imaging.

2)

**Q. What are the goals of the Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative?**

A. This initiative will help providers and Premera determine not just whether appropriate tests are ordered, but also the impact on member costs and quality care. Premera's Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative is built on clinical guidelines, which are designed to promote appropriate use of advanced diagnostic imaging services based on consensus medical opinion of the use of these services, with the following goals:

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

3)

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

A. Premera has selected AIM as the vendor to manage its Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative (AIQI). American Imaging Management, Inc. (AIM) is a leading imaging management company with national experience working with health plans to promote the most appropriate use of advanced diagnostic imaging services through the use of widely accepted clinical guidelines, advanced analytical capabilities and a commitment to provide excellent service.

4)

**Q. Who should providers call if they have questions?**

A. If providers have questions about the AIQI program or participation requirements they should contact **Premera Physician and Provider Relations at 1-800-722-4714, option 4.**

Providers should contact **AIM Customer Service 1-866-666-0776** for assistance with the following:

- Online/call-in process
- Registration, log-in, web functionality, system requirements
- Questions about AIM's clinical guidelines

5)

**Q. Is this the first-step to a prior-authorization program?**

A. It is our sincere intent to achieve objectives for appropriate utilization of advanced imaging scans through this quality initiative, without implementing a prior authorization program with claim denials. However, if the level of participation in the program is low, Premera will consider other approaches to moderate costs and improve quality and safety.

6)

**Q. How will Premera use the data gathered through this program?**

A. We will use the information in two ways:

- Premera will use the data to determine utilization patterns and appropriateness of these advanced imaging services as compared to nationally accepted clinical guidelines.
- We will share information with providers about overall participation in the program, and how a provider's own utilization compares with clinical guidelines.

## Program Design and Requirements

7)

**Q. What are the requirements of the Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative?**

A. Ordering/referring physicians must contact AIM to obtain an order review and order number from AIM before scheduling elective outpatient diagnostic imaging services. In addition, radiology providers/free standing imaging centers should confirm that an order review has been submitted with AIM prior to service delivery. **Rendering providers should not delay or interrupt urgent services to our members as a result of this initiative.**

8)

**Q. What types of diagnostic imaging exams are included in this initiative? What types are excluded?**

A. The Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative includes outpatient elective CT scans, MRI, MRA, and Nuclear Cardiology studies. 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 are not required to complete an AIM order number request.

9)

**Q. When was the initiative effective?**

A. The initiative was effective for all procedures scheduled on or after **July 7, 2008**. Going forward, Premera ordering providers should contact AIM to obtain an order number for the advanced diagnostic imaging procedures contained on the CPT code list, which are to be performed on an outpatient basis.

10)

**Q. Which members are included in the Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative?**

A. The Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative includes all members enrolled in Premera's commercial products, not including Federal Employee Program (FEP) (and exceptions listed in Q #11). Please contact Premera Customer Service at 1-800-722-4714, option 2 if you have questions about members covered under the program.

11)

**Q. Which members are <u>not</u> included in the Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative?**

A. The Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative does not include the following members:

- Medicare Supplement
- Federal Employee Program (FEP)
- Out-of-state members (BlueCard)
- Members who have secondary coverage with Premera

12)

**Q. Will members be able to contact AIM?**

A. Members should contact Premera Customer Service directly if they have any questions about the Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative or their benefits.

13)

**Q. How does the AIM Process work?**

A. Ordering physicians' offices submit review requests through ***Provider****Portal*[SM] – 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, ID number, etc), diagnosis, symptoms, exam type, and treatment/clinical history will be requested.

If the information provided meets AIM's clinical criteria and is consistent with Premera medical policy, 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 or 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 if he or she is able to ensure the request is consistent with AIM's clinical criteria and health plan medical policy.

If an order number 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 AIM 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 website, *www.americanimaging.net* .

The Physician Reviewer will assign an order number for the requested service. If AIM's clinical criteria are not met, the outcome of the case will note that the AIM order number was given without program criteria having been met.

14)

**Q. How does a physician office staff member submit a order review request to AIM?**

A. There are two ways to submit order review requests for diagnostic imaging services:

- Once registered, a provider can follow the easy-to-use online process to complete an order request through ***Provider****Portal*[SM] – AIM's interactive Internet application
- If a provider does not have Internet access, they can submit an order request by calling AIM at 1-866-666-0776.

15)

**Q. What does a physician office need to do to obtain a review request online from AIM?**

A. Providers must register at AIM's website: *www.americanimaging.net/goweb*. Select "Premera" from the drop-down menu to begin the registration process (using the PIN supplied when prompted to "enter PIN"). Once a provider has registered or called in a request, they can check the status of all cases by web site or phone.

16)

**Q. How long is the AIM order number valid?**

A. Order numbers are valid for 60 days after the date of issue.

17)

**Q. What happens if the provider does not perform the scan within 60 days?**

A. If the provider has not performed the scan within 60 days, most likely the clinical situation has changed. After 60 days the provider must have the request reviewed again with current clinical information.

18)

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

A. No, although the review and order number should be obtained ***prior to scheduling*** the study, order numbers are valid for 60 days from the date of issuance.

19)

**Q. Can providers obtain an AIM order number on a retrospective basis?**

A. Because the AIQI is a quality and education focused program, it is important to submit review requests before the exam is completed. However, when urgent situations arise (e.g., an injury or need for immediate imaging occurs), AIM will accept calls for retrospective requests within 2 business days of the service being performed.

20)

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

A. *Provider**Portal***$^{SM}$ - 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 review requests for Premera members at any time via the web.

21)

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

A. If an email address is provided during the registration process, the password will be sent within 24-48 hours upon completion of the registration.

22)

**Q. What if a provider cannot find themselves listed as an ordering/servicing physician?**

A. Call Premera Physician and Provider Relations at 1-800-722-4714, option 4.

23)

**Q. Who should providers contact if they have questions about AIM'S web site or the review process?**

A. Providers should contact **AIM Customer Service 1-866-666-0776** for assistance with the following:

- Online/call-in review process
- Submitting an review request
- Registration, log-in, web functionality, system requirements
- Questions about AIM's clinical guidelines

24)

**Q: What is the imaging provider's role in the Advanced Imaging Quality Initiative?**

A: Imaging facilities are strongly encouraged to verify an AIM order number has been obtained prior to scheduling the study. In addition, imaging providers must submit ordering/referring provider information, per guidelines from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), in boxes 17 and 17b on CMS-1500 forms. **Rendering providers should not delay or interrupt urgent services to our members.**

25)

**Q: What should the rendering provider do if the ordering provider has not obtained an order number from AIM?**

A: If an ordering provider consistently fails to obtain an order number from AIM, Premera is interested in knowing. We suggest contacting Premera Physician and Provider Relations at 1-800-722-4714, option 4 to share this information. Imaging providers are not required to provide this information to us; however, we believe there is a shared responsibility for assuring the success of this program, by imaging as well as ordering providers. **Rendering providers should not delay or interrupt urgent services to our members.**

26)

**Q: Will the claim be denied if an imaging study has not been reviewed by AIM?**

A: No. We will not deny claims if providers do not participate. However, provider participation will help ensure quality improvement and appropriate cost containment in relation to advanced imaging services. Broad provider participation may help us avoid the need for a prior authorization program. Network providers are expected to participate in this quality improvement initiative.

27)

**Q: Can the rendering provider modify the information once an AIM order number has been obtained?**

A: No, only ordering providers can modify order information. However, imaging providers may request an add-on to an existing order if a scan of a contiguous body part is needed after the initial scan is completed. This additional request can be obtained by calling AIM toll-free at 1-866-666-0776, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

28)

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

A. Inpatient diagnostic imaging is not included in this program; however, this does apply for non-emergent, outpatient imaging services.

29)

**Q. I have radiology equipment in my office. Will I be able to perform diagnostic exams in office and will I be required to contact AIM for a review request to perform CT, MRI/MRA, Nuclear Cardiology exams, on Premera members?**

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

30)

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

A. Emergency room services are not required to complete an AIM review and order number request. Outpatient elective diagnostic imaging services are typically non-urgent in nature. For those rare requests that are medically urgent, providers should contact AIM on the next business day, through the AIM Call Center.

31)

**Q. Which specialties do AIM physicians represent?**

A. AIM physician reviewers represent a wide range of specialties, including radiology, cardiology, oncology, orthopedics, and primary care. Most are still practicing part time.

32)

**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 reproducible 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 Clinical Practice Guideline development include:

- American College of Radiology (ACR) Appropriateness Criteria
- American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM)
- Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM)
- American Academy of Neurology (AAN)
- American College of Cardiology (ACC)
- American Heart Association (AHA)
- American Medical Association (AMA)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

33)

**Q. Who develops the clinical criteria for the initiative?**

A: AIM's guidelines for appropriate diagnostic imaging utilization are reviewed annually by:

- An independent Physician Review Board, including both radiologists and specialists
- Client Medical Directors
- Local Imaging Advisory Council (representing local physician communities)