

Metrocrest

Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine

Mitchell Fagelman, M.D.

- Orthopaedic Surgery
- Sports Medicine
- Arthroscopic Surgery
- Shoulder and Elbow Reconstruction

November 30, 2009

Craig W. Goodhart, M.D.

- Sports Medicine
- General Orthopaedics
- Knee and Shoulder Replacement and Reconstruction

Nick Cleary
Genesis Physicians Group
12201 Merit Drive, Suite 350
Dallas, TX 75251

Dear Nick:

Phillip M. Graehl, M.D.

- Hip and Knee Replacement
- Knee Reconstruction & Arthroscopy
- General Orthopaedics

Healthcare continues to be a hot topic with employers, employees, the government, insurance carriers and providers of medical services, all expressing various levels of concern as to what the future holds. At the provider level, we are sensitive to the balance we need to maintain between access, service, quality and cost.

James A. Guess, M.D.

- Adult and Pediatric Spinal Disorders
- Scoliosis
- General Orthopaedics

The purpose of this letter is to follow up with you regarding Blue Cross Blue Shield's (BCBS) position on reimbursement for radiology services performed in an orthopaedic office, a change that Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) initiated in August 2009, which could spread to other insurance carriers as well. BCBS made a change in its reimbursement methodology which discourages office-based practices from providing x-rays and other radiology services in their office. As an orthopaedic practice, x-rays are an integral part of the services that we provide. It is not practical, nor safe, for our physicians to diagnose and treat orthopaedic medical conditions without the use of x-rays and expect to achieve a quality outcome.

Keith A. Heier, M.D.

- Foot and Ankle Surgery
- Ankle Replacement
- Sports Medicine

We discussed these concerns with BCBS in a face-to-face meeting on August 25, 2009. In spite of the potential negative impact on patient care and quality, BCBS stated that they would not be able to address this issue until August 2010.

Charles E. Neagle, III, M.D.

- Hand and Wrist Surgery
- Arthritic Reconstruction
- Compressive Neuropathies

We are sensitive to the need to moderate the cost of medical services as it is our standard procedure to provide the appropriate level of services that offer the potential for the best quality outcome for the patient without ordering unnecessary services. If the trend that BCBS initiated continues unabated, our practice may not be able to offer radiology services and patients may need to seek radiology services at an approved BCBS imaging center.

Glenn S. Wheeless, M.D.

- Orthopaedic Surgery
- Sports Medicine
- Arthroscopic Surgery
- Reconstructive Surgery of Shoulder, Hip and Knee

A possible scenario could play out in such a way that patients may need to make multiple visits between our office and an approved imaging center before an accurate diagnosis could be made and subsequent care provided. We feel strongly that this is a waste of the patient's time, is unnecessarily costly and does not contribute to quality of care. Our orthopaedic surgeons are uniquely qualified to order and interpret x-rays in their own office, and in our opinion, this will provide the highest level of care and service for the patient at the most reasonable cost.

Shikha Sethi, M.D.

- Spine and Sports Medicine
- Back and Neck Pain
- Electrodiagnostics
- Orthopaedic Rehabilitation

This letter reflects the collective concern of 14 orthopaedic practices representing 110 physicians in the DFW area. I have also spoken to orthopaedic administrators in both Houston and Austin, and they are supportive of working with BCBS to recognize the importance of in-office radiology for orthopaedic practices. This issue has been elevated to the leadership level of T-Bones, a Texas based association of orthopaedic administrators (<http://www.texasbones.org/index.html>) formed in 1992 representing a significant number of orthopaedic practices throughout the state of Texas. I am working to get this topic on the agenda for the Spring 2010 T-Bones meeting. Today, I heard back from the American Association of Orthopaedic Executives (<http://www.aaoe.net/>). Their representative is setting up a time for me to discuss this issue with both AAOE as well as the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. I am hoping that this conversation will lead to discussion of this issue at the national level.

It is our desire that you aggressively pursue discussions with BCBS in order to get them to recognize that a blanket policy of discouraging in-office radiology through reimbursement tactics should not be applied equally to all specialties. It is imperative that BCBS recognize the critical nature of this service and its impact quality, cost, safety and service for the patient.

Sincerely,



Rick Weymier, MBA, FACMPE
Administrator