



COALITION OF STATE RHEUMATOLOGY ORGANIZATIONS

December 19, 2011

Reed Tuckson, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer
United HealthCare
9900 Bren Road East
Minnetonka, MN 55343
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Dear Dr. Tuckson:

I am writing to you in my capacity as president of the Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations which represents practicing rheumatologists from 28 state and regional rheumatology societies across the country. We have become aware of United HealthCare's recent policy change regarding the use of biologic medications in the treatment of patients with rheumatoid arthritis. Historically, the choice of a biologic therapy for a patient who has failed other non-biologic DMARD therapy has been a collaborative decision made by the physician and the patient. Many factors influence this decision. All issues are discussed openly and a mutual decision is reached regarding the most optimal and appropriate treatment for any given patient.

The current policy, which requires the failure of two predefined subcutaneous medications before the utilization of other approved biologic agents is unacceptable in many respects. First and foremost, there is no clinical data to justify or support this "double fail first" treatment algorithm. There are ongoing studies evaluating optimal treatment pathways for patients with different levels of rheumatoid disease activity. These are not yet complete and it is therefore premature to impose an arbitrary algorithm, applicable to all patients' individual and different disease severity levels, co-morbid conditions, and personal preferences and capabilities. Additionally, there is no clear definition of failure in the current policy. Most importantly, this policy usurps the decision-making process that should rightfully belong in the domain of the physician-patient relationship.

It is the physician's responsibility and the patient's right to make the primary and final determinations about the most appropriate course of treatment.

We will be investigating all strategies that will help us to influence United HealthCare to rescind this decision. Additionally, we will insure that we make known to our United HealthCare patients the potentially negative effects this policy may have on their healthcare.

Please feel free to contact me to initiate a constructive discussion regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael C. Schweitz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael C. Schweitz, M.D., F.A.C.P.
President, Coalition of State Rheumatology Organization

Michael C. Schweitz, M.D., President
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