



COALITION OF STATE RHEUMATOLOGY ORGANIZATIONS

January 18, 2011

Jeffrey Kang, MD, MPH
Chief Medical Officer
CIGNA Corporation
CIGNA Corporate Offices
900 Cottage Grove Rd
Bloomfield, CT 06002

Dear Dr. Kang:

I am the president of the Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations which represents practicing rheumatologists from 26 state and regional rheumatology societies across the country. We have become aware of Cigna's impending 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 nonbiologic DMARD therapy has been a collaborative decision made by the physician and the patient. Many factors influence the decision regarding the route of administration, including the patient's desire to self-inject or be infused as well as the patient's physical limitations which may inhibit his ability to self-administer. Additionally, other complications of the patient's medical condition may dictate the use of a non-TNF medication. These issues are discussed openly and a mutual decision is reached regarding the most optimal and appropriate treatment.

The upcoming policy change which requires the failure of two self-administered subcutaneous TNF drugs before allowing treatment with an infusible biologic drug is an unacceptable policy in many respects. First, there is no clear definition of failure in the policy that has been recently posted. There is no clinical data to justify or support this "double fail first" treatment algorithm. Most important is the usurpation of the physician-patient decision-making process.

I also want you to know that we are currently evaluating all mitigating strategies to protect our patients and our rights as treating physicians to make appropriate clinical decisions. These include all state and federal regulatory and legislative pathways that may help us to address this type of egregious and intrusive policy. Also, we will ensure that our patients are aware of Cigna's policy and the potential negative impact it may have on their health care.

We urge you to reconsider and rescind this policy as soon as possible. We would welcome the opportunity to have a constructive dialogue with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael C. Schweitz', is written over the word 'Sincerely'.

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

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