

We met with Medical Director of Fidelis (Dr. Vincent Marcello) on 5/16/23 to address epidural policy. There was a follow up meeting on 8/24 for the same issue. These meetings are frustrating. These were our second and third meetings addressing non coverage of any epidural block greater than a year. The medical director agrees with us (epidural blocks should be covered greater than 1 year as with Medicare). Unsure how much power he has with Centene (parent company) which formulates policy. He brought this to their attention early March. In the interim he had asked us to forward denials so he can review. We sent many. This company represents 7% of our patients and 63% of our denials. Also explained that we have successfully introduced a bill in Albany which would force federally funded programs (Medicaid) to comply with Medicare guidelines. Why do we have to follow Medicare rules with respect to documentation and audit exposure while they can selectively ignore LCD components at their convenience? I did mention the \$1.1 billion in profit for Centene in the first quarter of this year. That is a real number...

We will keep harassing Fidelis and we should all work to improve our documentation. I would strongly encourage all to familiarize yourselves with LCDs and include supporting bullets in your documentation prior to procedure. On a positive note, a bill has been recently passed in the NYS legislature which mandates all utilization reviews must be done by MDs in same specialty as of 1/2024. This company routinely uses internists and pediatricians to issue denials. Dr. Marcello is aware of this and so is the company. Hard to foresee continuation of denials when same specialty MDs are reviewing. We have another meeting scheduled for late fall with Dr. Marcello.

In the interim, continue to persist in your appeals, Eventually the appeals process reaches an external review which is typically done by an MD in Pain Management. Denials are always overturned at that point.

I know we are all frustrated, anxious, and working real hard here. Costs up, reimbursement down. A new regulation every day. Just remember that we are the good guys. We are trying to help people. Above all it is important to maintain our idealism. Collaborative dialogue with the insurance industry will be essential going forward despite their financially driven agenda. Will keep you all in the loop. Hope this is helpful...