

## **CIGNA HealthCare Reimburses Medical Providers for Treating Depression**

CIGNA HealthCare realizes that depression is often identified and treated in the medical care setting. We encourage our providers to evaluate, diagnose, and treat depression when appropriate.

### **Depression Management Touch Points:**

- 1 Assess for Depression:** Effective treatment begins with a thorough evaluation of the patient and accurate diagnosis. Screening tools can be helpful to identify depression. The use of DSM-IV criteria is essential to an accurate diagnosis. When depression is identified, remember to code the diagnosis appropriately on claim submissions. For Example:  
296.20 Major Depression, Single Episode  
296.30 Major Depression, Recurrent
- 2 Select Appropriate Therapeutic Modality:** Choosing the appropriate treatment for each individual patient is critical to treatment outcomes. While medications can work well in moderate to severe clinical depression, psychotherapy may be considered an effective alternative in treating mild depression. When prescribing antidepressant medication, consider using a medication on the formulary when appropriate to help minimize the expense for the patient.
- 3 Provide Medication Information:** A number of studies have shown patients' lack of understanding about the disease of depression, onset of therapeutic effect of medication, and their concerns about the risk of medications are significant causes of medication discontinuation. Provider discussions to inform patients about depression in a collaborative treatment environment can significantly improve treatment adherence and outcome. Explain the expected duration of medication therapy. Depression guidelines from the American Psychiatric Association and others highlight the appropriateness of continuing medication for 6-9 months. Educate patients that it usually takes at least 2-4 weeks before any therapeutic effectiveness of the medication is observed.
- 4 Follow-Up Appointments for Monitoring Treatment Response:** For medication monitoring, there should be a minimum of three follow-up visits within the first 12 weeks of treatment (HEDIS® 2003 measures). Depression scales can be used for monitoring therapeutic treatment progress. For more information on diagnosing and treating depression, see our Primary Care Clinical Guidelines for Depression at: <http://apps.cignabehavioral.com/web/basic/site/provider/treatingBehavioralConditions/treatingBehavioralConditions.jsp>

**Reimbursement:** Claims for office visits related to medication management with a behavioral diagnosis billed by a provider in the CIGNA HealthCare network are considered for reimbursement under medical benefits. Submit claims to CIGNA HealthCare under the appropriate medical CPT Evaluation and Management code. Please note that this policy does not apply when these services are covered under a CIGNA HealthCare capitation arrangement.

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