

Provider Report™

ABSOLUTE TOTAL CARE



by Total Carolina Care

Going Green: Reducing Paper Claims

In an effort to go green, Absolute TOTAL Care is urging its providers to submit all claims electronically with EDI. In addition to environmental benefits, providers will also realize the following benefits:

- Claims paid faster and more accurately than paper claims.
- Reduced postage and paper costs.
- More efficient and productive submission process.
- Cleaner data submissions result in fewer claims denials.
- Faster acknowledgement of received claims.

If you are ready to get started, you will find a list of our associated EDI trading partners online at www.absolutetotalcare.com or you may call 1-800-225-2573, ext. 25525, to speak with someone at our EDI Help Desk. Our staff can help you get set up for electronic submissions, help you choose a clearinghouse and answer any other questions about this process. For additional information, please contact your Provider Relations Representative.

A Word From Our CEO

Aaron Brace shares his vision for success.

While words really cannot capture how I feel about the opportunity to move to South Carolina and work collaboratively with healthcare providers, the state of South Carolina and key stakeholders in the community to make a difference in the lives of our citizens, I will give it a try.

About three months ago, I moved my family to Columbia, S.C., from the New Orleans area and joined the team at TOTAL Carolina Care (now Absolute TOTAL Care) as their Plan President and CEO. I made this move after five years in operations and sales at United-Healthcare, and four years in hospital contracting administration at HCA. I have been fortunate to have terrific mentors and employers over a 17-year career in healthcare, who I am confident have prepared me to be of service to you and the communities we serve throughout the state.

So how can Absolute TOTAL Care make a difference in South Carolina? I have had elements of this conversation with many physicians and members of the community at large over the past few months. As I now lead this organization that has over 47,000 Medicaid and SCHIP members, there are a few themes that resonate in our vision,



and I would like to share three of my favorites.

No. 1: Handle with care. A simple phrase you may write on something valuable has application in our day-to-day operations. I challenge our team every day with this: If we approach every member with great care, we can make a difference.

We have some really great programs that demonstrate this, like our MemberCONNECTIONS™ program, where Absolute TOTAL Care representatives go into the home and assist members with special needs or provide a member with a high-risk pregnancy a cellular phone preprogrammed with our nurse's number and the member's doctor's number.

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and Aiken

Help Patients Make A Smart Start

Absolute TOTAL Care has a prenatal program called START SMART for Your Baby™, which we are proud to share with you. Please think of START SMART for Your Baby as an added resource for you and your staff.

When you notify us of a patient's pregnancy, she becomes a part of START SMART for Your Baby, and a world of effective assistance and knowledgeable support becomes available to her. Our national OB and NICU physician specialists direct program development and our experienced OB RN Case Managers manage and implement START SMART for Your Baby locally.

We stand ready to assist you and your staff as we reach out to members to help them have healthy pregnancies. Our innovative approaches to engaging and educating our moms include our website, www.startsmartforyourbaby.com, MP3 players loaded with podcasts ranging from preterm labor to postpartum care to 17P therapy, preprogrammed cell phones for our members who have no reliable phone service, and specialized outreach staff who can make home visits and assist with a variety of social issues and barriers to care.

We also want you to know that your plan of care is important to us and we welcome your calls and inquiries. We're especially excited to remind you that 17P is a covered benefit for those patients for whom you decide it is medically necessary (homebound or non-homebound).

Talking About STIs

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) now recommends high-intensity counseling for primary care patients at high risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Those at high risk include all sexually active adolescents, adults with a history of STIs within the past year and adults with multiple sex partners.

Based on a review of studies, the task force found evidence suggesting a mod-

est reduction in STIs, increased use of contraceptives among male adolescents and decreased nonsexual risky behavior and pregnancy in sexually active female adolescents.

Assessing patients for STI risks dovetails with encouraging them to be tested for HIV. Routine HIV testing of all patients older than age 13 is recommended in clinical guidelines recently issued by the American College of Physicians. Earlier USPSTF guidelines recommend screening

of adolescents and adults if they have HIV risk factors.

Don't hesitate to address STIs with older patients, who may be re-entering the dating world after divorce or the death of a spouse. Vaginal changes in postmenopausal women may put them at increased risk for HIV transmission and other STIs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 15 percent of new HIV infections occur in the over-50 age group. Use counseling to raise awareness and teach protection.



News From Quality Improvement

The following are located on www.absolutetotalcare.com:

- Clinical practice guidelines
 - Physician guidelines for diagnosis and management of asthma
 - Diagnosis and evaluation of a child with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder
 - Summary guidelines for general diabetes care
 - Physician guidelines for routine antepartum care
- Preventive health guidelines
 - Recommendations for preventive pediatric healthcare—Bright Futures
 - Recommended adult immunization schedule
 - Recommended immunization schedule for persons ages zero to six years
 - Recommended immunization schedule for persons ages seven to 18 years
 - Catch-up immunization schedule for persons ages four months to 18 years
 - Catch-up immunization schedule for persons who start late or who are more than one month behind
- Medical record documentation standards
- Physician office site visit review tool

Help Us Grow!

We welcome physician feedback and input. Please consider joining Absolute TOTAL Care's physician clinical committees. Meetings are held quarterly, on site and via telephone. Please contact Suzanne Love, Director of Quality Improvement, at 1-803-933-3673 or slove@centene.com.

IMAGING—A QUESTION OF OVERUSE?

Use of diagnostic imaging technology has increased dramatically, adding significantly to the nation's healthcare bill. The number of CT and MRI units has more than doubled over the past decade, and that has led to a doubling and tripling of CT and MRI scans respectively, reports *Health Affairs*. The rise in medical imaging adds more than \$1.2 million annually to Medicare costs alone.

Is the increased use justified by improved health outcomes? What about the radiation risks to patients? Would other conventional, less expensive diagnostic tests work as well? The use versus overuse debate won't be resolved without more evidence of the cost-effectiveness of imaging tests and the effect on patient care.

From the CEO

Continued from page 1

No. 2: Be provider-centric. In January and February, Absolute TOTAL Care had a team of 17 individuals calling on provider offices every week, providing information and picking up issues to take back to our central office to resolve. Approximately \$350,000 in claims adjustments have been processed in the past six weeks. In December, we centralized all provider relations, contracting, service and claims audit under one officer at Absolute TOTAL Care, to maximize accountability. Being *provider-centric* makes a difference and allows our provider partners to focus on patients.

No. 3: Be active in the community in a meaningful way. When I joined the organization three months ago, I was very pleased to see us involved in the Pop Warner youth football program and the Harvest Hope Food Bank. Making a difference in the communities we serve is a priority for Absolute TOTAL Care and a personal priority of mine.

Again, I consider it an honor and a privilege to be here, leading our team and working with our provider partners, the state and members of the community. If I can ever be of service, or if you have ideas about other ways to make a difference for the citizens of our great state, I hope you will send me a note at abraces@centene.com. Enjoy this edition of *Provider Report*.

Sincerely,

Aaron Brace
Plan President and CEO
Absolute TOTAL Care

An Unhealthy Economy Takes a Toll

Too many patients skimping on healthcare could lead to serious problems for everyone.

Is the current rocky financial situation having a destabilizing effect on your patients' health? A growing number of Americans have family budgets so tight they're now forced to scale back on medical care. Making tough choices in hard times is probably not an issue you've talked about with patients in the past, but addressing it now may help to prevent more serious health problems for them down the road.

How widespread is the problem? A 2008 Commonwealth Fund survey found that half of Americans with chronic diseases said they skimmed on care during the past two years for cost reasons. Among those surveyed, 43 percent said they hadn't refilled prescriptions, they'd split pills or they'd skipped doses to make the supply last longer. Thirty-six percent said they hadn't seen a doctor for a medical problem or incident. And 38 percent said they

didn't get a recommended test, treatment or follow-up evaluation. Note that these findings reflect conditions before the collapse of the global financial markets.

What's alarming about the situation is the intermediate and

long-term consequences of a large number of people not getting care when it's needed. Short-term care cutbacks serve to light the fuse for a future explosion of serious medical conditions requiring costly hospitalizations.

What You Can Do to Help Your Patients

- [1] Address the issue of financial stress as a health issue that's affecting everyone. Use the opportunity to remind patients why physical exercise, a good diet, adequate sleep and a social support network are better alternatives than couch-potato retreats, junk food, smoking and alcohol.
- [2] Point out that some people are looking for ways to reduce medical expenses. Explain that some cost-cutting decisions can have serious medical consequences. State your willingness to help educate patients.
- [3] Review the treatment plan with the patient, then ask about compliance in a non-judgmental way. For example: "Are there any things you've done differently with your medications?"
- [4] Mention options, such as a medication switch to a lower-cost generic version. Provide printed information about prescription-assistance programs and other sources of care that patients may need to tap during hard times.

Few people are comfortable discussing their finances, so tread with sensitivity and keep the focus on how to help the patient stay as healthy as possible.

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For more information about our Clinical Guidelines, please visit our website at www.absoluteotalcare.com.

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