



The Pharmacy Connection

A forum for pharmacy related news and updates for DMH programs

May 21, 2012

A Message from the Medical Director, Roderick Shaner, M.D.

The auditor controller recently said that we sometimes allow our clients to “side-step” medically necessary treatment. Can the department seek reimbursement from Medi-Cal for services provided to a client who refused a treatment that we considered medically necessary? For example, what if a DMH client who has schizophrenia decides that he doesn’t want any more medication? The answer is that we can seek reimbursement if the services make sense and we properly document the circumstances.

There are a couple of principles for we clinicians to keep in mind. First, client choice is a key to our voluntary services. If treatment isn’t desired, we respect that, whether or not it impacts our bottom line.

Second, we can bill for a different treatment that is accepted by the client, assuming that different treatment is likely to be effective in ameliorating the condition. If a client with schizophrenia doesn’t want medication, but will accept other rehabilitative services, we can seek reimbursement because we know those services are often effective in their own right. We must document that we have recommended using medication (if that’s the case), and the client refused. We must also document that the client accepts other services that can be effective in ameliorating the illness (if that’s the case as well.)

Finally, if we really don’t have any effective treatment that is acceptable to the client, we need to document that as well. In such cases, we should not claim for services, and we should, in conjunction with our administrative supervisor, recommend discontinuation of services.

To access previous bulletins, go to the DMH Pharmacy webpage: http://dmh.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dmh/clinical_tools/clinical_pharmacy

