



The Pharmacy Connection

A forum for pharmacy related news and updates for DMH programs

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

Auditor Controller staff recently reviewed DMH prescriber's clinical records and had two questions:

- First, can services to DMH clients who are stabilized by medication management alone meet Medi-Cal medical necessity criteria and, therefore, be billable?
- Second, if such medication management services meet Medi-Cal medical necessity criteria, how do we document this on the Annual Assessment Update for auditing purposes?

The answer to the first question is "Yes." Medication management alone is a powerful tool that often makes the difference between a high quality of life or a descent into severe dysfunction. Services that prevent loss of function and associated need for more intense treatment meet medical necessity criteria for Medi-Cal reimbursement. Even if we think that additional therapeutic interventions might be helpful but the client refuses them, we can still provide medication treatment if it is useful, remembering that our services are "client directed."

The answer to the second question is that we must write more than "Stable" on the Annual Assessment Update and, if indicated, additional treatment modalities should be explored. The Auditor Controller showed us an Annual Assessment Update for a severely ill individual who was, thankfully, well stabilized on medication and did not want other treatment. Here is what was written on the Annual Assessment Update, followed by a model of a response that better documents medical necessity:

1. What progress has the client made toward meeting objectives as identified in the previous Client Plan?

Actual Answer: Remains Stable.

Suggested Answer: The client's depression is significantly attenuated by his increased compliance with his medication regimen, and this has facilitated his adherence to scheduled clinic appointments. He continues to decline other potentially useful interventions, although they have been offered.

2. Describe the client's current symptoms/problems.

Actual Answer: Stable.

Suggested Answer: The client's disorganized thoughts, depression, and anxiety symptoms have remitted, permitting him to work productively and to socialize more fully with others. However, he needs constant encouragement to keep appointments and adhere to prescribed medication regimen.

Yes, proper documentation takes a little more work, decreasing the amount of time we can devote to our patients. But it's a good investment in ensuring that our system will have the funding necessary to secure a better future for those we treat, even when that treatment is "meds only."

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

