



May 7, 2020

Re: Prior Authorization Flexibility for the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Health Plan:

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) is concerned by the severity of the current COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and is working closely with policymakers and other stakeholders to mitigate its impact on all healthcare workers and patients. It is vitally important for the safety of patients and staff to minimize the exposure risk during medical visits, evaluations, testing and procedures. Across the world, new exposure minimization protocols are being implemented in all healthcare settings and procedures including the required use of personal protective equipment, social distancing and limiting medical procedures with significant close contact.

With these new processes in mind, the ACC strongly recommends payers and prior authorization vendors suspend any requirements for an initial cardiac exercise/treadmill/bicycle stress test when assessing patients for coronary artery disease. The exercise stress test can increase exposure with potential coughing and heavy breathing by patients and prolonged close patient-clinician contact. If required, pharmacologic stress imaging is preferred.

Additionally, the ACC requests payers and prior authorization vendors remove any restrictions or barriers on cardiovascular imaging tests. These tests include echocardiography, single photon emission computed tomography-myocardial perfusion imaging (SPECT-MPI), positron emission tomography (PET), cardiac computed tomography angiography (CCTA) and cardiac magnetic resonance (CMR). During this challenging time of limited access and focused resources, clinicians and patients must have the latitude to utilize the most appropriate medical test available.

Finally, the College understands that general access to healthcare services varies greatly by region, but care decisions must factor in patient and clinician preferences for mitigating virus exposure. The ACC strongly encourages additional flexibility for all procedure and testing decisions during this COVID-19 pandemic. We welcome further conversation with payers and prior authorization vendors to discuss specific policies.

Sincerely,

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The mission of the American College of Cardiology and the American College of Cardiology Foundation is to transform cardiovascular care and improve heart health.