

Compliance Alert

January 24, 2006

Compliance Alert, provided by Group Benefit Services, gives you the most up to date information regarding industry news as well as legislation and regulatory activities affecting your health plan.

TOPIC: EMERGING THERAPEUTIC ISSUE FROM ESI

Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a Health Alert Notice, recommending against the use of amantadine and rimantadine for the treatment or prophylaxis (prevention) of influenza in the U.S. for the duration of the 2005-06 influenza season. Evidence indicates that a high portion of the circulating influenza A viruses have developed resistance to these agents.

Through January 12, 2006, of the 120 influenza A (H3N2) isolates collected from patients in 23 states, 109 (or 91%) have shown to be resistant to amantadine and rimantadine. All of the virus strains have demonstrated susceptibility to the neuramidase inhibitors, Tamiflu® (oseltamivir - Roche) and Relenza® (zanamivir - GlaxoSmithKline). Testing of influenza isolates for resistance to antiviral medications will continue through the 2005-06 influenza season, and recommendations will be updated as needed.

As a result:

- The annual influenza vaccination is still recommended as the primary strategy for preventing morbidity and mortality associated with influenza. CDC notes that it is not too late for individuals to get vaccinated for the duration of the flu season.
- CDC encourages the use of Tamiflu for chemoprophylaxis (prevention) and the use of Tamiflu or Relenza for treatment of influenza A and B.
- Amantadine is also used to treat the symptoms of Parkinson's disease, and should continue to be used for this indication.

This communication is not intended to be legal advice and should not be construed as legal advice. If you have any legal questions or concerns about your plan, GBS recommends seeking counsel from an ERISA attorney.

Keeping you informed. Just one more reason to choose GBS.

Compliments of
GROUP BENEFIT SERVICES, INC.

Express Scripts response:

In an effort to inform physicians of the changes to CDC's influenza guidelines, we have identified physicians who have prescribed rimantadine or amantadine since November 2005 (beginning of the flu season).

A communication summarizing the CDC's new recommendations will be sent to physicians for those clients enrolled in the physician mailing portion of the Emerging Therapeutic Issues program.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact your Group Benefit Services Account Manager at 1.800.638.6085.

This communication is not intended to be legal advice and should not be construed as legal advice. If you have any legal questions or concerns about your plan, GBS recommends seeking counsel from an ERISA attorney.

Keeping you informed. Just one more reason to choose GBS.