We are writing to express our deep concern regarding your recent decision to award Medtronic preferred status as the in-network durable medical equipment (DME) provider of insulin pumps. Although we agree that there is an immediate need to address the rising costs of diabetes care, your decision not only contradicts established guidelines for individualized diabetes care but also places patients at increased risk for adverse health events and associated costs.

In its recent press release, the American Diabetes Association stated: “Partnerships between insurers and vendors that limit therapeutic choices may impair a patient’s access to certain treatments and tools, and adversely affect patient outcomes.” Moreover, as recently reported by Puckrein and colleagues, disruption of access to preferred tools and technologies, such as diabetes testing supplies, negatively impacts patient adherence to prescribed treatment, which is significantly associated with increased mortality and hospitalizations.

Although United Healthcare will have a clinical exception process to evaluate situations in which physicians believe a non-Medtronic pump is required, it is well known that these processes are often onerous, forcing physicians to spend significant time and resources advocating for the needs of their patients.

To address this issue, we urge United Healthcare to simplify and streamline its exclusion process to expedite patients’ ability to obtain the insulin pumps that meet their individual needs. In addition, because effective diabetes management requires use of numerous treatment tools and approaches, the simplified exclusion process should expedite coverage of all diabetes medications and technologies, including blood glucose monitoring and continuous glucose monitoring systems.

An in-depth statement of our position regarding the need for respecting patient choice and the potential unintended consequences of disrupting patient access to the most appropriate diabetes self-management tools and treatments will be published in the upcoming issue of Journal of Diabetes, Metabolic Disorders and Control. Attached is an advance copy of the article, which has been approved for
publication. We hope this information will compel United Healthcare to adopt our recommendation for implementing an expedited exclusion process that supports personalized diabetes care.

Sincerely,

Larry Ellingson, R. Ph., NDVLC Chair, ADA Chair of the Board, 2004-2005
Larry Smith, NDVLC President, ADA Chair of the Board, 2005-2006
George Huntley, NDVLC Treasurer, ADA Chair of the Board, 2009
Stewart Perry, NDVLC Secretary, ADA Chair of the Board, 2008
John Griffin, Esq., ADA Chair of the Board, 2011
Hunter Limbaugh, ADA Chair of the Board, 2012
Stan Panasewicz, ADA Treasurer, 2003-2006

Links


National Diabetes Volunteer Leadership Council
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