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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
Governor

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TO: Local Health Officers  
Communicable Disease Controllers  
Pandemic Influenza Coordinators

FROM: California Department of Public Health (CDPH)

Regarding: Access to antiviral medications to treat influenza for patients in the Medi-Cal program

Please note the following efforts to assure prompt access of Medi-Cal patients to antiviral medications to treat influenza. On 1/11/18, the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) provided information on accessing antiviral medications to:

- Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs) to encourage a review of current policies regarding access to antiviral medications for influenza and investigate ways to reduce unintended barriers to timely treatment
- MCP Pharmacy Directors, stating that “DHCS requests that all MCPs assess current policies and potential barriers to immediate access to treatment in order to effectively curtail the spread of influenza throughout the state. Removal of prior authorization requirements may be an appropriate option to improve timely treatment of the virus.”
  - DHCS also noted that “it is important to provide a response within 24 hours of a request for a prior authorization and dispense a 72-hour supply of a covered outpatient drug in an emergency” as mandated by W & I Code 14185, or SSA 1927(d)(5).

DHCS will also issue an alert to all Fee-for-Service Medi-Cal providers reminding them that all brands of the recommended antiviral drugs to treat influenza, including oseltamivir, *do not require prior authorization* and may be billed directly without a Treatment Authorization Request. DHCS notes that this “will remove obstacles that will hinder the timely dispensing of brand name formulations when generic formulations are not available.”

If you become aware of access barriers Medi-Cal patients face in your jurisdiction, contact provider services of the Managed Care Plan listed on the back of patient’s benefits card, or the DHCS [Office of the Ombudsman](mailto:MMCDOmbudsmanOffice@dhcs.ca.gov) (phone 1-888-452-8609, or email: [MMCDOmbudsmanOffice@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:MMCDOmbudsmanOffice@dhcs.ca.gov)). If the patient is in the Medi-Cal Fee for Service program, providers can contact the Medi-Cal Telephone Service Center at 1-800-541-5555.