



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548



HUMAN RESOURCES  
DIVISION

B-164031(5)

April 14, 1978

The Honorable Robert A. Young  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Young:

On July 15, 1977, you requested information on and an examination of several aspects of Government-funded sterilizations. On February 27, 1978, we reported on the results of our review of selected aspects of Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) funded nontherapeutic sterilizations (HRD-78-74). We informed you that we would report separately on our findings on Medicaid-funded therapeutic sterilizations.

As explained in our February 27 report, we randomly selected for review 193, or about 10.5 percent of the 1,646 Medicaid sterilization claims received by Pennsylvania Blue Shield during the third calendar quarter of 1977. Of the 193 claims, 62 were for female sterilizations reportedly done for therapeutic reasons. Our medical advisor reviewed patient ages and diagnoses on the Medicaid claim forms and selected 40 of these claims for detailed review of medical records to evaluate the medical necessity of the surgical procedures. Medical records for 6 of the 40 patients were not readily available.

Our medical advisor reviewed medical records for the remaining 34 patients, on each of whom hysterectomies were performed. These records were furnished by the hospitals in which the procedures were carried out. In 11 of the 34 cases our medical advisor questioned the medical necessity for the hysterectomies. At our request, the Medical Director, Division of Utilization Review, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, which administers the State's Medicaid program, also reviewed the medical records for these 11 patients and concurred with our medical advisor's opinion. The 11 hysterectomies were performed in 11 different hospitals in Pennsylvania.

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At the time the 34 patients were admitted to the hospitals for hysterectomies, 4 of the 11 hospitals were performing reviews of Medicaid patients' records under delegations from Professional Standards Review Organizations.

Your office has agreed to distribute copies of this report to the other members of the Congress requesting our review. Also, as agreed with your office, we are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of HEW and other interested parties. This report completes our study which was initiated at your request.

Sincerely yours,

*Philip A. Bernstein*  
for,  
Gregory J. Ahart  
Director