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THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

May 13, 1997

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** SURGEON GENERAL OF THE ARMY  
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY  
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE

**SUBJECT:** Clinical Reengineering: Policy for Documentation of Health Care Information Line (HCIL)  
Telephone Calls by TRICARE Prime Enrollees

This memorandum establishes policy for documentation in medical records of TRICARE Prime enrollees who call the Health Care Information Line (HCIL) and are directed to seek medical care. Contractors are responsible for ensuring a feedback mechanism is in place for providing appropriate information regarding HCIL callers to Primary Care Managers (PCMs).

TRICARE administrators and PCMs are concerned that there is no consistent, efficient process across the Military Health Services System for documentation of such calls. Each of the Services' regulations currently authorize the inclusion of information from civilian sources in patient medical records. For a number of reasons (e.g., regulations interpreted differently, HCIL intake form not an approved DoD or Service form) some facilities have not incorporated HCIL information into patient records, or have established exceptions to local policy and operating procedures before doing so. Further, when beneficiaries move within the MHSS and their medical records are screened, HCIL information may be removed and discarded from records in facilities where the local policy does not include it as part of the record of care. This has potentially adverse consequences for patients (continuity of care) and healthcare facilities (information management and accreditation issues).

The information and guidance provided by HCIL staff are based on physician-determined guidelines. When these guidelines suggest that the caller seek medical attention, the HCIL intake form (written, facsimile or electronic copy) shall be reviewed by the Prime enrollee's assigned individual or team PCM for medically prudent follow-up (e.g., annotation only, telephone call, appointment). The PCM may annotate the action taken directly on the intake form, which shall be incorporated into the medical record as a permanent item. In accordance with HA Policy 96- 016, "Policy Guidelines for Implementing TRICARE Primary Care Programs in the Military Health Services System (MHSS)," December 19, 1995, "PCMs are advocates for their assigned patients and liaisons for them with the MHSS."

My point of contact is Colonel Christine Miller, who can be reached at (703) 695-6800.

*Edward D. Martin*

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**HA POLICY 97-049**

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