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THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

MAY 21 1997

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** CHAIR, TRICARE EUROPE EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE  
CHAIR, TRICARE PACIFIC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
CHAIR, TRICARE LATIN AMERICA EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

**SUBJECT:** Policy for enrollment in TRICARE Prime in overseas TRICARE regions

This correspondence provides policy guidance for enrolling in TRICARE Prime in overseas TRICARE regions. The Overseas TRICARE Prime Program offers enrolled beneficiaries an enhanced health care benefit, including preventive health services, a Primary Care Manager (PCM), health care finder services, and uniform access standards. Prime enrollment requires the Lead Agent to, at a minimum, obtain a signed enrollment application form, communicate with each beneficiary as to what enrollment in TRICARE Prime means, assign a PCM, and enter the enrollment data into the DEERS database.

All active duty personnel will be enrolled in TRICARE Prime, and when feasible, assigned to a PCM in a Military Treatment Facility (MTF). Active duty enrollment may be conducted prior to, or in conjunction with, active duty family member enrollment, as determined by the enrollment procedures established by the Lead Agent.

TRICARE Prime health care services will be provided to active duty family members who choose to enroll. Family member enrollment is not mandatory, but the positive incentives for enrollment should be aggressively marketed. The overseas health care benefit will be the same as the TRICARE Prime program offered in the United States, with the added benefit of a waiver of copayments for active duty family members when they obtain care from host nation network providers.

The TRICARE Prime option for service members and their families overseas will be provided at remote locations, where feasible. Enrollment, in most cases, will be to a PCM in the supporting MTF. In those instances where an MTF PCM assignment is not possible, you are authorized to utilize host nation, or other providers outside the direct care system, as PCMs. However, a designated MTF will be responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable quality assurance standards for care provided by the non-military providers. I ask that you give this highly visible, quality-of-life initiative your personal attention.

Enrollment of active duty personnel and family members at some remote locations may require modifications to the specialty care access standards. A system, however, should be implemented to coordinate the specialty care requirements of these enrollees with the goal of seeking the earliest available specialty care, given travel distance and aeromedical evacuation routes.

CHAMPUS-eligible retirees and their family members may be offered enrollment in TRICARE Prime only *after* the initial enrollment of active duty personnel and their family members is completed. Any pertinent requirements in applicable local and regional directives or agreements must be satisfied before TRICARE Prime may be offered to these beneficiary categories. Please advise my office a minimum of 120 days before initiating plans to offer TRICARE Prime services to CHAMPUS-eligible retirees and their family members residing in your region. Modifications to the fiscal intermediary contracts will be required to support retiree enrollment.

Enrollment of CHAMPUS-eligible retirees and their family members will be restricted to available capacity of MTF PCMs and will be at the discretion of the local MTF commander depending on local availability of health care services. This discretionary authority must be exercised with prudent concern and awareness of the responsibility to all eligible beneficiaries. Vigilant attention to capacity levels must be performed in order to ensure all arriving active duty families have an opportunity to enroll to the MTF. The Lead Agent is responsible for ensuring that consistent procedures are established throughout the region. The overseas TRICARE Prime delivery system must provide all TRICARE Prime services, meet all standards, and charge the same enrollment fees and cost shares paid by CHAMPUS-eligible retirees and their family members in the United States.

The policy aspects of enrollment of non-command sponsored family members in TRICARE Prime are currently being reviewed by the Department, in coordination with the Joint Staff and the Military Services. Additional guidance will be provided once this review is completed. If required, public comments will be solicited as part of the process for establishing federal regulations. In the interim, active duty family members may not be denied TRICARE Prime enrollment based on command sponsorship status.

If it is determined during enrollment processing, or by other means, that command sponsorship was denied because of lack of capability to provide medical and/or dental services at a specific location, this should immediately be brought to the attention of the sponsor and unit commander. The potential health risks should be explained and documented.

My program manager for overseas health care issues is Lieutenant Colonel Richard Jones, TRICARE Operations Policy, (703) 614-4705.



Edward D. Martin, M.D.

Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense

cc:  
J-4, The Joint Staff  
Surgeons General

**HA POLICY 97-052**

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