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THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

20 APR 1998

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (M&RA)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (M&RA)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE (MRAI&E)

**SUBJECT:** Policy Memorandum: Improving Consumer Choice of Primary Care Manager in the Military Health System

In the spirit of The President's Consumer Bill of Rights and Responsibilities in Health Care, the Department of Defense is strengthening the consumer's right to choose a Primary Care Manager (PCM) who best meets his or her needs. Our family members and retired beneficiaries currently have the right to choose among our three health-plan options: TRICARE Prime, Extra, and Standard. When they choose to enroll in our managed care option, TRICARE Prime, they have the freedom to choose any available PCM within the direct care system. If no PCM is available within the direct care system, consumers have the right to choose a civilian network PCM. To improve our options for choice, women shall have the option to choose a PCM who has advanced training in women's health issues, and Prime enrollees who suffer from chronic medical illness and receive the majority of their health care from a network specialty provider shall have the right to choose that provider as their PCM if that specialist serves in a PCM capacity.

The primary medical care administered to Active Duty members is driven by the readiness needs of the Armed Services. Readiness must come first if we are to remain the world's predominant military force. Nonetheless, we must provide our service members with as much choice as possible within these limits. If stationed ashore or in garrison, service members may choose an appropriate PCM among those available within the direct care system. Those members attached to deployable units, such as ships, air wings, or ground combat units, will continue to receive their primary care through their supporting medical departments.

My point of contact for this matter is CDR John Sentell, MC, USN, at telephone (703) 697-8975 or email: [jsentell@ha.osd.mil](mailto:jsentell@ha.osd.mil).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary A. Christopherson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gary A. Christopherson

Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense

**HA Policy 98-032**

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