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THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

MAR 19 1996

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

SUBJECT: Admission of Prime Enrollees with Civilian Primary Care Managers

Region 6 personnel recently voiced concern about our TRICARE policy requiring the MTF to be the provider of first choice for specialty and inpatient care when it applies to enrollees with civilian primary care managers (PCMs). They were specifically concerned about admitting enrollees to the MTF for inpatient care the civilian PCM could provide. Lead Agents and MTF commanders currently have the authority to issue an NAS and authorize civilian care in cases where the civilian PCM will be the admitting and attending physician. NASs should be issued on a case-by-case basis after weighing patient interests with institutional needs.

Based on our PCM guidelines, primary care optimally is continuous across outpatient and inpatient care settings. Requiring a civilian PCM to refer an enrolled beneficiary back to the MTF for care that he or she could provide could in some cases potentially detract from the patient-physician relationship, and limit the civilian PCM's ability to coordinate care across care settings. This should be balanced with institutional case mix and business case needs when determining whether to issue an NAS for inpatient care a civilian PCM could provide. We should also continue to provide civilian network PCMs the opportunity to obtain privileges at MTFs for admissions of their enrolled patients.

Civilian PCMs give us the flexibility to offer enrollment to those beneficiaries who choose TRICARE Prime beyond our MTFs' capacity. We must develop our referral policies to allow enrollees with civilian PCMs the same opportunities to promote the continuing patient-physician relationships key to successful TRICARE managed care operations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward D. Martin".

Edward D. Martin, M.D.
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

cc: TRICARE Lead Agents

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Last update: 2/23/2000