UnitedHealthcare’s Lab Benefit Management Program

Advancing the Quality and Safety of Lab Services

UnitedHealthcare’s Lab Benefit Management Program is improving quality and safety for 79 commonly ordered lab tests. The program gives physicians real-time, evidence-based guidelines and helpful information about lab quality and efficiency standards at the time they order tests. This helps to reduce disparities in patient care, identify the highest-quality labs that are in-network for a patient’s insurance plan, and lower patients’ out-of-pocket costs.

Pilot Program: Improved Quality & Cost Outcomes
UnitedHealthcare began to pilot this program in Florida in October 2014 with 570,000 members. Here’s how the program has improved quality and lowered costs for lab tests ordered during that pilot:

- Of lab orders processed through the Lab Benefit Management Program met evidence-based guidelines, up from 46 percent one year earlier.
- Of members now use in-network labs to maximize their benefits (often reducing out-of-pocket costs).
- Average out-of-pocket cost savings for members, thanks to greater use of in-network labs and compliance with evidence-based guidelines.
- Of physicians use the Physician Decision Support tool, showing increased familiarity and comfort using the online ordering system.

How it Works
Using the BeaconLBS® Physician Decision Support tool, doctors generally can order lab services through a few simple steps:

1. Log into BeaconLBS Physician Decision Support. This tool is already integrated into many EHR systems.
2. Enter patient information and the test being ordered.
3. Answer, on average, 1-3 questions to verify that the test meets evidence-based guidelines. This step is required only if the lab test is among the 79 included in our program; not all 79 tests will prompt questions to be answered.
4. Select from a drop-down menu of in-network labs for the patient’s insurance plan.
5. Tap “submit” to send the order to the lab; a confirmation is sent automatically to UnitedHealthcare.

30 Seconds Average amount of time it takes to order lab services using the PDS tool and answer questions about evidence-based guidelines.

14 Seconds Average amount of time it takes to order lab services using the PDS tool when no questions are prompted.
Lab Testing Needs Strong Standards
Recent research points to a need for better information, greater innovation and more consistent standards to improve quality of lab services. Independent studies and reports suggest:

Unnecessary tests and procedures are a serious problem, according to 73% of U.S. physicians surveyed in 2014 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; 85% say having specific, evidence-based recommendations easily available would be an effective solution.

Pathologists disagree 25% of the time in their interpretation of breast biopsies to diagnose breast cancer, according to a March 2015 JAMA study – underscoring the value of a second opinion for more complex lab results.

Lab-developed tests should have tighter supervision by the Food & Drug Administration, the agency argues in a Nov. 16, 2015, report.

Quality standards are crucial for complex pathology tests that inform life-and-death diagnoses – but not all labs meet the same standards, according to an in-depth investigation by The Wall Street Journal.

Did You Know?
Only 38% of physicians ordering pap smears in the Florida pilot followed the recommended evidence-based guidelines, illustrating a strong need to make it easier for physicians to have these guidelines at their fingertips.

Physician Feedback
We’ve worked closely with care providers to make the Lab Benefit Management Program as easy as possible for physicians and labs to use, while advancing quality and patient safety.

• During the two-year pilot program, we’ve held hundreds of meetings with physicians, pathologists and professional societies to refine our efforts.

• A new Scientific Advisory Board was created in early 2016 based on feedback from the provider community, comprised of primary care physicians and physician specialties who frequently order lab services. This Board meets regularly to help evaluate pilot results and advise on lab quality criteria.

• By collecting 20 years of clinical evidence from external, independent medical sources, our Physician Decision Support tool puts evidence-based recommendations at doctors’ fingertips.
What is a Lab-of-Choice™?

Within UnitedHealthcare’s laboratory network, Labs-of-Choice™ meet certain quality and accreditation criteria and offer lower overall cost.

The model mirrors UnitedHealthcare’s 10-year-old Premium Designation program, which publicly designates physicians who have a track record of better outcomes and efficiency. Learn More

Any in-network lab can apply to be designated as a Lab-of-Choice™.

A mix of independent labs and national lab companies offers patients more choice and convenience. Currently, 70% of Labs-of-Choice™ are non-LabCorp facilities.

“ Inaccurate results can result in the failure to detect life-threatening diseases, might cause patients to elect unproven therapies over proven ones, or can cause patients unnecessarily to undergo uncomfortable and even dangerous procedures. ”

–FDA Report (11/16/15)

Did You Know?

Lab results influence 70% of medical decisions. That’s why it’s so important to improve lab quality and push for more consistent standards.

For more information, visit: https://www.uhc.com/news-room/lab-program