BlueAdvantage Administrators of Arkansas will be working with AIM Specialty HealthSM (AIM) on a new integrated imaging program for outpatient diagnostic imaging procedures. AIM is an independent company that reviews advanced imaging services for clinical appropriateness on behalf of BlueAdvantage Administrators of Arkansas. This program is for Walmart and Tyson employees in the U.S. Effective January 1, 2013, for us to pay for high-tech radiology services, we will require prior authorization.

Here are answers to several frequently asked questions about this new program.

Program Overview

1. **Who is AIM Specialty HealthSM (AIM)?**

   Formerly American Imaging Management, Inc., AIM is a specialty benefits management company with national experience in promoting the most appropriate use of clinical services.

2. **What is AIM’s national presence?**

   AIM has provided specialty benefits management to national insurers, large employer groups, government programs and local/regional provider-owned health plans for more than two decades. Today, AIM does business for 42 health plans with services covering more than 32 million lives in all 50 states.

3. **How is AIM different from other specialty benefits management companies?**

   In addition to AIM’s extensive experience and strong market presence, its approach to utilization management is built on a foundation of continuous innovation and excellent service. This approach offers several unique strategic advantages and industry best practices to employers:

   **Superior Customer Service**

   - AIM’s three call centers, two in Illinois and one in California, process an average of 16,000 calls per day and 340,000 per month.
   - AIM currently processes approximately 60 percent of all of its requests via ProviderPortaSM, with certain markets processing in excess of 80 percent of its requests via the portal — 50 percent of those cases close online.
   - Key call center statistics include industry standards for Average Speed of Answer (14 seconds), Call Abandonment Rate (0.6 percent) and Average Length of Calls (4 minutes).
Whether the request is submitted online or over the phone, on average 96 percent of cases are closed in 24 hours, and 94 percent are closed the same day.

AIM’s management services earned a provider satisfaction rating of more than 97 percent.

**Patient Safety**

AIM provides its clients with a patient safety program designed to promote more informed decision-making by physicians and patients through relevant information about the radiation exposure associated with diagnostic imaging procedures. Since inception, the Patient Safety program has flagged more than 113,000 exam requests, educating providers before they render services.

**Differentiated Approach**

AIM bases its programs on clinical guidelines it has developed and revised through a rigorous process. The process includes:

- A comprehensive assessment of existing guidelines and literature
- Extensive feedback from both external and internal physician review panels
- Review by client medical directors

The review process focuses on educating providers on clinical appropriateness. Through peer-to-peer discussions, AIM helps its clients’ providers select the most appropriate services for their patients.

**Accreditation and Industry Recognition**

AIM has received several accolades for its member engagement and patient safety initiatives. AIM received the 2011 URAC Best Practices in Health Care Consumer Empowerment and Protection Award and the 2011 Best of Blue® award for its member engagement program.

AIM’s programs are also accredited by URAC and NCQA, and AIM has its ISO/IEC 27001 certification.

4. **What is the integrated imaging management program?**

AIM designed the integrated imaging program to meet the needs of employer accounts and their members, regardless of their locations. For January 1, 2013, AIM is implementing this integrated diagnostic imaging program for radiology and cardiology management solutions. The program consists of two major components:

1. **Case Review and Education**
2. **Member Engagement and Provider Transparency**

**Case Review and Education**

This component reduces inappropriate use through clinical review of radiology and cardiology requests submitted prospectively. AIM forwards cases that are unable to render an approval at intake to a clinician reviewer for further review. This offers providers an opportunity to leverage AIM’s expertise in determining the most appropriate exam. Medical necessity determination does not result in adverse payment implications.

**Member Engagement and Provider Transparency**
This component operates in tandem with case review and education. When a physician goes through the review process for an imaging exam, AIM provides price information that the physician can use to select an imaging facility. After the review process is completed, AIM compares the price for the imaging facility selected during the review process with other facilities located in the same geographic area. If the program finds another facility that performs the service at a lower price, an AIM representative proactively calls the member to provide this information. The member then can choose whether or not to switch to an alternative imaging facility for the exam and, if so, AIM provides assistance in scheduling the service.

5. **What are the goals of the program?**

AIM designed the program to evaluate, educate and promote the most appropriate uses of clinical services. Through this process we realize quality, safety and affordability improvements by:

- Empowering members with the information necessary to make more informed decisions about their health care and associated costs
- Helping employers better manage their medical expenses and equip their employees with the tools to make better care choices
- Promoting and guiding selection of the most efficient and cost-effective services
- Encouraging standardization of medical practice patterns and reducing variation in clinical evaluation
- Curtailing the performance of inappropriate studies and treatments
- Advocating bio-safety issues, including reduction of unnecessary radiation exposure and procedures
- Enhancing quality of healthcare using evidence-based medicine and outcomes research from numerous resources

**Program Requirements**

6. **Are any physicians exempt from participating in this program?**

We encourage all ordering/referring physicians to contact AIM before scheduling elective outpatient services, but the program is not mandatory.

7. **For January 1, 2013, what types of diagnostic imaging exams are covered under this program? What types are excluded?**

Case review and education targets outpatient elective CT scans, MRI, MRA, PET scans, nuclear cardiology and echocardiography studies.

Member engagement targets outpatient elective CT scans, MRI and MRA studies.
Imaging services provided in conjunction with emergency room visits, inpatient hospitalization, outpatient surgeries, or 23-hour observation are excluded from the program.

8. **What is the imaging provider’s role in the program?**

We strongly encourage radiology facilities to verify that the case meets clinical guidelines before scheduling the study.

9. **How does a physician office staff member know he or she needs to participate in the program and contact AIM?**

There are multiple ways a provider will hear about the educational program:

- ID cards
- Eligibility/benefits verification
- Provider newsletter/mailings
- Web announcement
- Ad hoc face-to-face provider training sessions (within Control Plan service areas)
- Members (who will also be educated about the program)

There are two ways providers can interact with AIM:

- By registering at AIM’s website: [www.aimspecialtyhealth.com/goweb](http://www.aimspecialtyhealth.com/goweb). (This link leads to third party website. The owner of this site is solely responsible for the contents and privacy policy on its site.) After registration, a provider can follow the easy-to-use online process through ProviderPortal — AIM’s interactive Internet application.
- By contacting AIM’s call center using the number on the back of the member’s ID card or directly to AIM at 866-688-1449.

10. **What online services does AIM offer? How do providers contact AIM after-hours?**

*ProviderPortal* — AIM’s interactive Internet application — is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and helps ordering physicians and staff quickly and efficiently submit and verify their requests for Walmart and Tyson employees at any time. A typical request on the ProviderPortal takes approximately three minutes to complete.

**Program Design: Case Review and Education**

11. **How does the case review and education program work?**

Ordering physicians’ offices submit requests via ProviderPortal — AIM’s interactive Internet application — or through AIM’s call center. AIM will guide Web users or callers through an interview where AIM will request member or ordering physician:

- Information (name, ID number, etc.)
• Diagnosis
• Symptoms
• Exam type
• Treatment/clinical history

If the information the Web user/caller provides meets AIM’s clinical criteria, AIM will guide the Web user/caller to select an imaging provider who will perform the imaging study. AIM will give the ordering physician’s office cost information when selecting an imaging provider.

If all criteria are not met or AIM needs additional information or review, AIM will forward the case to a Registered Nurse (RN) who uses additional clinical experience and knowledge to evaluate the request against clinical guidelines. If the case still cannot be assigned, it may be forwarded to an AIM Physician Reviewer (MD), who contacts the ordering physician directly to discuss the case and diagnostic imaging guidelines. AIM’s Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Guidelines (and any applicable Control Plan medical policy) serve as a foundation for this mutually respectful discussion. These Guidelines are available for download on AIM’s website, [www.aimspecialtyhealth.com](http://www.aimspecialtyhealth.com).

12. How long is the case valid and how long will it be in AIM’s system?

Cases are valid for 60 days after the date of issue and remain in AIM’s system for six years.

13. Is the ordering physician expected to run a case through clinical guidelines if it is an urgent case? And how does he or she do this in the evening and on weekends?

Requests for clinical guideline review are not expected for emergency room services. Outpatient elective diagnostic imaging services are typically non-urgent in nature. For those rare requests that are medically urgent, providers should contact AIM through Provider Portal, or on the next business day through AIM’s call center.

Program Design: Provider Transparency and Member Engagement

14. What data source does AIM use for pricing information?

AIM leverages the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association’s National Consumer Cost Transparency (NCCT) data. All Blue Plans supply this data bi-annually.

15. How are members notified when a more affordable imaging facility is available?

Once the review process is completed for CT scans, MRI and MRI, and the ordering physician has selected an imaging facility for the member, AIM compares the price for the facility selected with other facilities in the same geographic area. If the program finds another facility at a lower price, an AIM representative proactively calls the member to provide this information. The member can then choose whether or not to
switch to an alternative imaging facility for the exam and, if so, AIM provides assistance in scheduling the service.

16. **What happens if a member chooses NOT to use the lower-cost provider?**

For most employer groups, this is a voluntary program. If a member’s service has been reviewed, and the member has received an order request number, he or she may receive services at the facility that the ordering physician originally indicated.

17. **Does this program recommend a preferred or sub-network to ordering physicians or members?**

No, this program is not being used to build a preferred network or sub-network of providers.

**Standards for Clinical Guidelines and Criteria**

18. **Who develops the program criteria?**

AIM’s process for developing guidelines for appropriate diagnostic imaging utilization has been reviewed by NCQA and URAC. The guidelines are reviewed annually by:

- An independent physician review board of cardiologists, orthopedic surgeons, radiologists, neurologists and neurosurgeons
- Client medical directors

19. **What methods and resources does AIM use to develop the clinical guidelines?**

Development of AIM’s Clinical Guidelines involves integration of medical information from multiple sources to support the reproducible use of high-quality and state-of-the-art diagnostic imaging services. AIM bases the process for criteria development on technology assessment, peer-reviewed medical literature (including clinical outcomes research) and consensus opinion in medical practice. AIM updates the clinical guidelines biannually.

Some of the primary resources AIM uses for its Clinical Guidelines include:

- American College of Radiology (ACR) Appropriateness Criteria
- American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM)
- Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM)
- American Academy of Neurology (AAN)
- American College of Cardiology (ACC)
- American Heart Association (AHA)
- American Medical Association (AMA)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

BlueAdvantage Administrators of Arkansas is an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.