

ACA ISSUES AND NEWS

THE LATEST ON ASH AND ACN

AMERICAN SPECIALTY HEALTH

In a recent letter to at least one insurance company, American Specialty Health (ASH) Chief Operations Officer Robert White refutes statements from a recent ACA press release and insists, “ASH does not engage in any wrongful practices regarding patient care or reimbursement.” The letter also invokes the name of ASH’s vice president of governmental affairs, a two-time past president of the ACA, and states that he has “routinely engaged the ACA over the last six years on behalf of ASH, but unfortunately ACA is choosing a track that is based upon false assumptions and accusations.” The letter goes on to claim a high satisfaction rating among chiropractors in their program and that each chiropractor “has voluntarily chosen to participate” in their networks.

“Mr. White conveniently ignores the fact that there is a groundswell of displeasure among chiropractors nationwide with the policies and procedures of ASH – and we have received hundreds of written complaints to prove it,” commented ACA Executive Vice President Kevin Corcoran, CAE. “Technically, participation is ‘voluntary’; in reality, doctors feel they have no choice. They can either participate and receive at least a pittance in reimbursement – or opt out and receive absolutely nothing.”

ACA President Richard Brassard, DC, added that a recurring tactic of ASH is to attempt to associate the company with a former ACA president to “confuse chiropractors and lure them into believing that ACA condones ASH practices.

“This tactic is, in our opinion, distasteful and highly misleading,” added Dr. Brassard. “The only ‘engagement’ they have had with the ACA is in the form of shallow handshakes and photo ops – not serious discussion and problem solving. Our legal team has made it clear that when ASH is ready to really talk, we will sit down and discuss the possible settlement of these issues.”

AMERICAN CHIROPRACTIC NETWORK

The ACA has also written a strongly worded letter to American Chiropractic Network (ACN) CEO Thomas J. Allenburg, DC, requesting that ACN place an immediate moratorium on further terminations under its “professional improvement program” and reinstate those doctors who have already been terminated. ACA’s letter came in response to a letter from Dr. Allenburg contending that ACA’s concerns “result from miscommunication regarding and misunderstanding of our operations.”

Both letters resulted from a July 27 meeting between ACA and ACN officials that did not alleviate ACA’s concerns about the network’s abusive policies. In a follow-up letter, ACN asked ACA to reveal the names of doctors who had responded to ACA’s data collection campaign and to provide specific details about those complaints. The ACA refused, stating privacy concerns and doctors’ fears of retaliation by ACN.

“The reality we see is a profession in which many fine and capable doctors have been excluded

from participation in your program because they cannot or will not comply with the overly restrictive policies and limitations that affect quality health care,” George McClelland, DC, ACA’s immediate past chairman, responded in the Sept. 6 letter. “We also see many doctors practicing under the threat of termination. Doctors are struggling to maintain their practice and their livelihood and at the same time provide quality healthcare to their patients despite limitations placed upon them by ACN. . . I don’t believe you understand the degree of fear and misapprehension your policies have caused. Doctors are fearful of losing their practices and their livelihood and therefore are extremely reluctant to have their names revealed to your organization. Therefore, unfortunately, you were not able to dispel our concerns. Rather, our concerns are heightened with every call we receive or complaint we obtain.”

SUPPORT FOR EFFORT GROWS

The number of state organizations throughout the country that are joining ACA in these efforts continues to grow. The current list includes: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Washington. Several other states have expressed an interest in joining as well.

For more information on ACA’s continuing efforts with the chiropractic managed care networks, I invite you to visit a special section of the ACA website that can be accessed at www.acatoday.com/networks.