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PHYSICIAN FEE DISCLOSURE WILL HELP DOCTORS AND INSURERS
WORK TOGETHER FOR PATIENTS

HARRISBURG (December 22, 2006) – Doctors in the Philadelphia region can now see how much the area’s largest insurer will pay them for treating patients. The new component of a web-based system, which gives doctors access to their fee schedules, was created as part of a class action lawsuit settlement between the insurer and a statewide specialty physician association.

The 25,000 doctors, chiropractors, therapists and others who provide medical care for patients insured by Independence Blue Cross (IBC) were notified this week of the new features in an e-mail from software vendor NaviNet, which has designed the electronic inquiry system.

The Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society (POS) President Charles D. “Chip” Hummer, III, M.D. said the fee schedule information will promote better cooperation between physicians and IBC.

“This is one product of the first successful settlement against a Blues insurer nationally, and will help strengthen our healthcare system in Southeastern Pennsylvania for the benefit of patients and providers,” Hummer said. “The Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society will continue to make sure the remaining terms of this settlement agreement become a reality.”

In 2001, three Montgomery County orthopaedic surgeons sued IBC claiming that IBC has “engaged in a pattern and/or practice of improperly denying reimbursement or improperly reducing the amount of reimbursement” owed to them and other orthopaedic surgeons for medical care they have rendered. One year later, The Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society joined in the lawsuit with the late John R. Gregg, M.D., Robert Goode, M.D. and Vincent J. DiStefano, M.D. A settlement was reached in 2003, which applies to all providers who submit claims for payment or reimbursement to IBC.

In the terms of the settlement, IBC agreed to:

- Disclose to providers the standard fee schedules, and changes in fee schedules, that are applicable to the provider’s specialty.
- Disclose policies or procedures that may impact the payment or reimbursement that a provider receives for services rendered.
- Process claims in accordance with established standards in various areas, including multiple surgery, radiologic guidance during a procedure, and certain claim specific modifiers used in billing.
- Replace the independent procedure designation with the separate procedure designation of the Current Procedural Terminology.
- Establish a formal resolution process for provider payment disputes.

POS is a professional medical specialty organization representing more than 1,000 orthopaedic surgeons across Pennsylvania. For more information, visit the POS website at www.paorthosociety.org.

This year POS celebrates its 50th Anniversary "***50 Years and Growing Stronger***" with a series of public education materials and activities highlighting the excellence of orthopaedic medicine in Pennsylvania and the importance of bone, joint and muscle health at every age. Visit www.growingstronger.org for more information.

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