

Jan. 13, 2021

Kannan Ramar, MD, *AASM President*
American Association of Sleep Medicine
2510 N. Frontage Road
Darien, IL 60561

Re: Your inquiry about UnitedHealthcare's coverage policy for referral privileges for advanced practice providers

Dear Dr. Ramar:

Thank you for contacting us about UnitedHealthcare's Obstructive Sleep Apnea Treatment Medical Policy, version 2020T0525BB, which includes our prescription or referral guidelines for oral appliance therapy.

In your letter dated Oct. 14, 2020, you shared concerns the American Association of Sleep Medicine (AASM) received from a member regarding coverage denials when advanced practice providers (APPs) refer members for dental appliances. You noted that more recent position statements from AASM expanded the term of "physician" to refer to a medical provider who is licensed to practice medicine and that the scope of practice of APPs is often regulated on a state-by-state basis, as there are physician shortages in many areas to treat and diagnose members with sleep disorders. You requested that the UnitedHealthcare medical policy be modified to allow for referrals from APPs and you provided one reference to support your request.

We appreciate your insights and want to give you some background information.

How We Determine Coverage

Benefits for members are determined by the provisions of their specific health plan. The guiding standards are the safety and efficacy of the covered health care services. When we make a coverage decision, we reference the member's specific benefit plan document and UnitedHealthcare medical policy. Medical policy coverage decisions are based on scientifically proven clinical evidence.

In general, UnitedHealthcare defines "unproven services" as those determined to be ineffective for the treatment of the medical condition or not to have beneficial effect on the health outcomes, due to insufficient and inadequate clinical evidence from well-conducted randomized controlled trials or cohort studies in prevailing published, peer-reviewed medical literature. These are defined as follows:

- Well-conducted randomized controlled trials. Two or more treatments are compared to each other, and the patient is not allowed to choose which treatment is received.
- Well-conducted cohort studies from more than one institution. Patients who receive study treatment are compared to a group of patients who receive standard therapy. The comparison group must be nearly identical to the study treatment group.

Coverage of APPs Referring Members for Dental Appliances

UnitedHealthcare's policies drive toward improving health outcomes, and we appreciate your feedback. The coverage of referrals made by APPs is currently under review. Once the review is completed, we'll update our policy information. You can find our most current medical policies at UHCprovider.com/policies.

UnitedHealthcare network providers who disagree with a pre-service request for benefits determination should be encouraged to contact us in writing to request an appeal, as outlined in the member's denial letter. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Wendy MacLeod, MD
National Medical Director

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