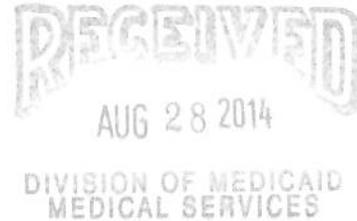




2014

STEFANIE M. THOMAS, D.P.M., M.B.A.
ASHLEY D. BLACKWELL, D.P.M.
Medical and Surgical Treatment of the Foot

Margaret Wilson
Office of the Governor
Division of Medicaid
Bureau of Policy, Planning and Development
Walter Sillers Building
Suite 1000
550 High Street
Jackson, MS 39201



Dear Ms. Wilson:

Thank you for inviting public comment on the proposed reauthorization of the Healthier Mississippi waiver. As a licensed podiatrist in Mississippi and member of the Mississippi Podiatric Medical Association, I am very concerned about this waiver's exclusion of podiatric care and its impact on the health of the nearly 5500 Medicaid patients the Healthier Mississippi program serves.

Healthier Mississippi is intended to administer health care services to those Mississippians who fell under the former Poverty Level, Aged and Disabled program. These individuals routinely have foot care problems and are of the greatest need for podiatric services. The original Healthier Mississippi waiver excluded this care from coverage for reasons that are still unclear. Disabled individuals routinely require podiatric care and the inclusion of this care in the program gives these 5500 Mississippians and their health care providers a greater range of options to treat ailments. No one wants to see a patient lose a foot to amputation because of a lack of access to proper foot care.

Podiatric care in Mississippi and elsewhere is reasonably inexpensive and we cannot fathom where inclusion of this service in the Healthier Mississippi program could be a big budgetary issue – especially considering program participation is limited to only 5500 people. In fact, research from the University of Arizona indicates a net savings to Arizona's Medicaid program administrator when podiatric care is available to patients.

Since this program is limited to so few Medicaid patients, the inclusion of podiatry as an eligible service will not likely improve my clinic or practice in this state. I feel confident that my colleagues throughout the state would agree. Still, it is important that needy, disabled patients should have reasonable access to the care that they require, including podiatric services.

We hope your agency will reconsider its exclusion of podiatric care from the Healthier Mississippi waiver program and open health care access for Medicaid patients.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Thomas, DPM

August 22, 2014

Margaret Wilson
Office of the Governor
Division of Medicaid
Bureau of Policy, Planning and Development
Walter Sillers Building
Suite 1000
550 High Street
Jackson, MS 39201

Dear Ms. Wilson:

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Sincerely,



Craig Williams, DPM

August 28, 2014

Margaret Wilson
Office of the Governor
Division of Medicaid
Bureau of Policy, Planning and Development
Walter Sillers Building
Suite 1000
550 High Street
Jackson, MS 39201

Dear Ms. Wilson:

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I recently cared for a patient whom I saw in the emergency department of Hancock Medical Center. This patient suffered from a severe foot infection that may have taken his leg or his life had he not been admitted to my care. This patient was treated by myself without regard to insurance coverage and provided the highest level of care. The patient underwent a toe amputation needed to save the remainder of his leg and has made a complete recovery. Following the amputation the patient required months of wound care and antibiotic therapy which proved successful. I am proud to say as of yesterday I released the patient to full activity without restriction. The patient has returned to full time employment without any long term effects of the infection. Since Podiatry has previously been an excluded service none of my services will be reimburse. Podiatric services play a very important role in limb preservation and save the health care system an untold amount of money.

I hope your agency will reconsider its exclusion of podiatric care from the Healthier Mississippi waiver program and open health care access for Medicaid patients.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey R. Benzing, DPM



MsPMA
MISSISSIPPI PODIATRIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
975 North Street, Suite 207, Jackson, Mississippi 39202

August 28, 2014

Margaret Wilson
Office of the Governor, Division of Medicaid
Bureau of Policy, Planning and Development
Walter Sillers Building, Suite 1000
550 High Street
Jackson, MS 39201

Dear Ms. Wilson:

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Sincerely,

Ricki Garrett, PhD,
Executive Director