

Radiology Quality Initiative (RQI) Program Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

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Program Overview

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) has partnered with American Imaging Management, Inc. (AIM), a medical management company with national experience in managing the utilization and quality of diagnostic imaging services. BCBSIL and AIM will implement a statewide utilization management and quality improvement program for the management of outpatient diagnostic imaging services.

All BCBSIL PPO (including Labor and FEP) and BlueChoice Select members are included in the Radiology Quality Initiative (RQI) program for the following elective, outpatient, high-tech imaging services:

- CT (Computed Tomography) scans
- CTA (Computed Tomographic Angiography)
- Nuclear Cardiology Studies
- PET (Positron Emission Tomography)
- MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)
- MRA (Magnetic Resonance Angiography)
- MRS (Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy)

Effective for tests performed on or after April 15, 2006, ordering physicians must obtain a RQI number from AIM for the procedures described above. Servicing providers must verify that the RQI process has been completed prior to performing any of the selected procedures.

On April 3, 2006, AIM will open a Call Center at (866) 455-8415, which is available Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. (CST). Call Center staff will answer inquiries and accept RQI requests for service dates beginning April 15, 2006.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Why is BCBSIL implementing the Radiology Quality Initiative program?**

BCBSIL's RQI program is built on AIM's Clinical Practice Guidelines, designed to evaluate and direct the appropriate utilization of high technology diagnostic imaging services. In the process, quality, safety, and cost improvements are realized by:

- Promoting and guiding selection of the most efficient and cost-effective diagnostic imaging services
- Encouraging standardization of medical practice patterns and reducing variation in clinical evaluation
- Curtailing the performance of inappropriate diagnostic imaging studies
- Advocating bio-safety issues, including reduction of unnecessary radiation exposure (for CT and plain film radiography)
- Enhancing quality of healthcare for diagnostic imaging studies using evidence-based medicine and outcomes research from numerous resources

Program Overview (cont.)

2. Which medical providers are affected by the RQI program?

- Ordering providers, including Primary Care Physicians and Specialists
- Servicing providers who perform diagnostic imaging tests at:
 - Freestanding diagnostic facilities
 - Hospital outpatient diagnostic facilities
 - Provider offices

3. What BCBSIL products/programs are excluded from the program?

Members who have:

- HMO Illinois
- BlueAdvantage HMO
- BlueChoice POS
- BlueCard
- Medicare Supplemental

4. Are routine radiology services a part of this program?

No. Routine radiology services such as x-ray, ultrasound or mammography are not subject to this program.

5. Will BCBSIL provide training to providers on the RQI Program?

Informational seminars for professional/institutional staff, provider billing, referral and scheduling personnel are being conducted at select locations. To register online, log on to www.bcbsil.com/provider/training.htm or fax the registration form to (312) 938-8021. If you do not have access to the internet, contact our Provider Telecommunications Center at (800) 972-8088 to request a registration form.

Program Requirements

1. How do I, as an ordering provider (PCP and/or Specialist), obtain an RQI number?

There are three (3) ways to obtain an RQI number for designated outpatient diagnostic imaging services:

- **Online:** AIM's web-based applications allows **you** to request an RQI number online at www.americanimaging.net, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **Telephone:** You may call the AIM Call Center to request an RQI number at (866) 455-8415 Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. (CST). The AIM Call Center will be operational effective April 3, 2006.
- **Fax:** You may download the fax form from AIM's Web site at www.americanimaging.net. The completed fax form should be faxed to (800) 610-0050. You will receive a confirmation and the RQI number faxed back to you.

2. What information is necessary to request an RQI number?

The following information is needed:

- Provider Information (name and address)
- Insurance Information (name of insurance carrier)
- Patient Information (name and member ID)
- Estimate or actual exam date
- Exam Type or CPT Code (if available)
- Patient's symptoms/conditions
- Results of Relevant Previous Studies

3. How does the RQI program work?

You can submit an RQI request through AIM's interactive web site, the AIM Call Center or by fax. Web users or callers will be guided through an interview where member and ordering physician information (name, ID number, etc), diagnosis, symptoms, exam type, and treatment/clinical history will be requested. If faxing, you should include the required information and fax the form to (800) 610-0050.

If the information provided meets AIM's clinical criteria, you will select an imaging service provider where the tests will be performed, and an RQI number will be issued.

If all criteria are not met or additional information or review is needed, the case is forwarded to a Registered Nurse (RN) who uses additional clinical experience and knowledge to evaluate the request against clinical guidelines. If an RQI number still cannot be assigned, the case is forwarded to an AIM Physician Reviewer (MD), who contacts you directly to discuss the case and diagnostic imaging guidelines prior to issuing the RQI number.

Program Requirements (cont.)

4. What responsibility do I have as a servicing provider?

You should verify that the RQI process has been completed prior to performing any of the selected services. To find the RQI number on AIM's Web site, you will need the following information:

- ❖ member's name
- ❖ ID number
- ❖ requested procedure

Servicing providers can verify an RQI request via the Internet at www.americanimaging.net or by calling the AIM Call Center after April 3, 2006 at (866) 455-8415 Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. (CST) for services after April 15, 2006.

5. Can a diagnostic facility initiate a request for an RQI number?

No. The ordering physician must request an RQI number.

6. How long is an RQI number valid?

RQI numbers are valid for 30 days after the date of issuance. If services are not performed within 30 days, a new RQI number must be requested.

7. Can I request more than one procedure at the same time for a member (e.g., MRI of pelvis and spine)?

Yes. The AIM system will support multiple procedure requests.

8. What happens if the member shows up at my facility for the tests, but a different facility was assigned when the RQI number was issued?

Contact the AIM Call Center. AIM staff will re-assign the RQI number to your servicing facility.

9. I am an ordering provider who has radiology equipment in my office. Will I be able to perform diagnostic exams in my office and request an RQI number?

Yes. Contact AIM and request an RQI number for imaging studies to be performed at your office or facility.

10. If I am an ordering and servicing provider, and I determine that the patient needs additional diagnostic testing while performing the requested services, what should I do?

You should complete the tests and call AIM to include additional tests under the RQI number.

11. Does the RQI program take the place of pre-certification?

No. RQI is a quality initiative program, not a pre-certification program. You must continue to pre-certify services for designated employer groups.

12. If a member arrives at my radiology facility and an RQI number has not been requested, may I still perform the test?

Yes. You may continue to perform the test. However, for the best service to the member, the RQI number should be verified when the member makes the appointment.

Program Requirements (cont.)

13. Will a BCBSIL physician be calling me for a physician-to-physician discussion of the case, if necessary?

No, BCBSIL physicians will not be involved in physician-to-physician discussions related to initial requests. AIM physician reviewers will be completing the physician-to-physician discussions.

14. Can a Physician Assistant and/or a Nurse Practitioner request RQI numbers?

Yes. Any office staff can request an RQI number as long as they have the necessary clinical information.

15. Is there a penalty if a provider does not comply with the RQI program?

No. There are no penalties. This program is a quality initiative, and the RQI number is used to track designated services. Continued participation in our PPO network requires each PPO provider to cooperate with Plan-initiated programs. Reports will be generated to identify providers who are complying with the RQI program.

16. What is the expected impact on my office staff?

The impact will be relatively light with the average provider ordering 1-2 of these studies per week, and 60-70% of these approved in a 3-5 minute interaction. In addition, an ordering physician typically only interacts with a physician reviewer in a peer-to-peer review for approximately 10% of the cases.

17. Will BCBSIL members receive communications regarding the RQI program?

Notification has been sent to employer groups, producers and our marketing/sales staff explaining this program. The process should be transparent to the member, thus member communication is unnecessary at this time. However, ordering providers should stress the importance of members receiving the requested service within the 30-day timeframe.

18. Will the AIM Call Center number be listed on member identification cards?

No. The AIM telephone number will not be listed on the member identification cards.

19. Will AIM have current BCBSIL membership records?

Yes. AIM will receive a weekly membership file of eligible BCBSIL members.

Claims

1. Is the RQI number required to submit a claim?

No. You are not required to include the RQI number on claims submitted at this time.

2. Does the RQI process affect claims processing?

The RQI process will not affect claims processing. Since the RQI program is a quality initiative effort and not a preauthorization requirement, the claims processing guidelines remain the same.

3. Does the issuance of an RQI number guarantee claim payment?

Issuance of an RQI number is **not** a guarantee of payment. The claim will be processed in accordance with the terms of a member's health care benefit plan.

4. Is an RQI number required if BCBSIL is the secondary carrier?

An RQI number is required if BCBSIL is secondary and another commercial insurance carrier is primary. However, when Medicare is the member's primary insurer and BCBSIL is secondary, an RQI number is not required.

Online Tools

1. Will I be required to register to use AIM's Web site?

Yes. You will need to register and receive a password in order to use AIM's Web site. The Web site is available on April 3, 2006, and the online request takes approximately 4 to 5 minutes to complete.

2. How long does it take to obtain a user password after registering on AIM's Web site?

If you have an e-mail address, the password will be e-mailed to you within 24 hours upon completion of the registration. If a procedure is scheduled during this 24-hour period, you should call the AIM Call Center at (866) 455-8415 to request the RQI number.

3. Is AIM's Web site available after-hours?

AIM's Web site is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and helps you and your staff quickly and efficiently submit and verify RQI requests at any time. A typical RQI request on the Web takes approximately three (3) minutes to complete.

4. Can the RQI number be requested through NDAS Online?

No. You may only request the RQI number online through the AIM Web site at www.americanimaging.net, or by calling the AIM Call Center at (866) 455-8415.

5. Will there be a link from NDAS Online to AIM's Web site?

No. There is no link from NDAS Online to AIM's Web site. However, there is a link on the BCBSIL Web site to AIM's Web site.

6. Will BCBSIL contracted radiology providers/facilities be loaded into AIM's Web site?

Yes. A weekly provider file will be sent to AIM.

Standards for Imaging Guidelines

1. Who develops the RQI clinical criteria?

The Radiology Program will follow BCBSIL's Medical Policy or clinical criteria developed by American Imaging Management for appropriate diagnostic imaging utilization. This clinical criteria has been reviewed and approved by NCQA and URAC and is reviewed annually by:

- An independent Physician Review Board, including cardiologists, orthopedic surgeons, radiologists, neurologists, and neurosurgeons
- AIM's Client Medical Directors
- AIM's Imaging Advisory Council

2. What methods and resources are used to develop the guidelines?

Development of the evidenced based clinical criteria involves integration of medical information from multiple sources, to support the use of high quality and state-of-the-art diagnostic imaging services. The process for clinical criteria development is based on technology assessment, peer-reviewed medical literature including clinical outcomes research and consensus opinion in medical practice.

The primary resources used for guideline development include:

1. American College of Radiology (ACR) Appropriateness Criteria
2. American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM)
3. Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM)
4. American Academy of Neurology (AAN)
5. American College of Cardiology (ACC)
6. American Heart Association (AHA)
7. American Medical Association (AMA)
8. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)