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Magellan Health Services Program Raises Awareness of Patient Radiation Exposure

Data Analysis, Dose Tracking and Education Help Health Plans, Physicians Balance Diagnostic Benefit, Patient Safety

AVON, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--With a new study suggesting that CT scans performed today could result in two percent of U.S. cancers in coming decades, and increasing utilization of CT potentially pushing that figure even higher, concern about exposure to radiation as a result of diagnostic imaging is increasing. Magellan Health Services, Inc., through its radiology management subsidiary National Imaging Associates (NIA), has been tracking this emerging issue over time and supports increased attention to it as a public health concern. In conjunction with its health plan partners across the country, Magellan/NIA has implemented patient safety initiatives based on several years of experience, research and consultation to generate greater awareness of potential risks and assist physicians and their patients in making more informed choices about diagnostic procedures that can lead to unnecessary exposure to radiation.

"There is no question of the wide-ranging benefit of advances in diagnostic imaging to the provision of health care in this country," said Eric Reimer, chief executive officer of National Imaging Associates. "But increased attention to the risks of radiation exposure and resulting cancers is warranted, as noted in the *New England Journal of Medicine* last week. The fact is that Americans today are being exposed to nearly six times more radiation from medical devices than they were in 1980. And we have found that many physicians and most patients are not fully aware of the exposure risks associated with certain imaging procedures."

"Our goal in working with health plans and physicians is to raise their consciousness about this important issue and facilitate discussion among patients, their doctors and their families so they can make informed health care choices," Reimer said. "In our experience, such efforts result in a decrease in the unnecessary use of diagnostic imaging, and we are proud to be taking a leadership role in this arena."

In an article published in the Nov. 29 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers David Brenner, Ph.D., D.Sc., and Eric J. Hall, D.Phil., D.Sc., linked the growth in the use of computed tomography (known as CT scans) with increased cancer risk. The federally funded study was conducted at the Columbia University Medical Center in New York City. The authors noted that the most effective way to reduce the radiation dose from CT scans is simply to reduce the number of CT studies that are ordered. The authors also noted that, if it is true that about one third of diagnostic imaging tests are not medically necessary, then possibly 20 million adults and one million children are being unnecessarily irradiated.

Magellan/NIA's radiation safety program begins with an analysis of medical claims data to identify health plan members who are approaching or who have reached high levels of medical radiation exposure as a result of repeated radiologic tests. Magellan/NIA then works with its health plan customers to develop customized awareness campaigns targeted to physicians and members. As part of the awareness campaign, members with high levels of exposure can be flagged within the Magellan/NIA authorization system so that physicians seeking authorization for CT scans, nuclear studies and other imaging procedures can be made aware of the patient's cumulative exposure level. Health plan providers also have access to online radiation safety tools to help them make decisions about diagnostic testing and the program also can incorporate Web-based educational materials for members and their families. Magellan/NIA's approach to reducing unnecessary radiation exposure was noted in a white paper published in the *Journal of the American*

College of Radiology earlier this year.

“In many cases, the benefits of having a diagnostic test far outweigh the risks of radiation exposure,” said Thomas G. Dehn, M.D., NIA’s executive vice president and chief medical officer and a Fellow of the American College of Radiology. “But, because radiation exposure is cumulative, it’s important that patients undergo the least invasive and fewest number of diagnostic tests necessary to accurately diagnose and treat their illness, avoiding unnecessary procedures early and reserving CTs and other relatively high-dose procedures for when they are absolutely necessary.”

“Our role is to provide information to ordering physicians to assist them in comprehensively addressing their patients’ needs. Early results of these efforts are promising. Many physicians, when alerted to patient-specific issues of radiation exposure, choose to use non-radiation producing diagnostic examinations as a substitute for their initial choice,” Dehn noted.

Radiology benefits management organizations such as Magellan/NIA review and authorize diagnostic imaging tests based upon medical necessity so that members do not undergo inappropriate diagnostic testing, and only qualified clinicians render and evaluate imaging tests. Such care management approaches reduce unnecessary radiation exposure generally, lessening concerns related to exposure from CT scans when they are clinically appropriate. By helping to avoid unnecessary diagnostic imaging, radiology benefits management also reduces costs for patients, their families, and health care purchasers. Magellan/NIA partners with some of the nation’s largest health plans to manage radiology benefits for nearly 20 million individuals.

About Magellan: Headquartered in Avon, Conn., Magellan Health Services, Inc. (Nasdaq:MGLN) is a leading specialty health care management organization. In addition to radiology benefits, the company manages behavioral health care and specialty pharmaceuticals. Its customers include health plans, corporations and government agencies.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Nationally recognized radiologist Thomas G. Dehn, M.D., the former chair of the American College of Radiology’s Task Force on Managed Care, is available for comment on this and other issues related to the use of diagnostic imaging. Interviews can be arranged by contacting Erin Somers (410-953-2405, essomers@magellanhealth.com) or Tina Carroll (314-387-5345, cmcarroll@magellanhealth.com).

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