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Provider Notification Update

Date of Notification	10/27/09
Plans Affected	All Lines of Business
Subject	Antiviral Flu Treatments

There have been recent concerns expressed by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to AHCCCS regarding time delays that members are experiencing in obtaining Tamiflu or Relenza.

Mercy Care Plan would like to reiterate that antiviral medications need to be started within 24-48 hours of the onset of symptoms to illicit the best possible outcome. Efficacies of antiviral medications diminish over time and are the most effective within the first 24-48 hours of the start of influenza symptoms. Immediate treatment using an antiviral is important in reducing complications from influenza, hospitalizations and other adverse outcomes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that physicians should not rely on flu tests to make decisions on whether to treat sick patients with antiviral drugs, as the flu tests are not always accurate. If the physician suspects the flu, and a patient is severely ill or a patient has risk factors like pregnancy, asthma, diabetes, or children under 2, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends any type of antiviral medicine be given promptly.

Mercy Care Plan does not require authorization for antivirals, so there should be no delay in treating members immediately.