October 11, 2010

Emergency Department Manager
care site
city, state zip

Introducing Emergency Patient Resources and Options (EPRO)

Dear Emergency Department Manager,

Thank you for your work in providing emergency care to our Group Health members.

In our continuing efforts to support the delivery of high quality emergency care, control health care costs, and offer informed choices to our members, we would like to introduce you to Group Health’s Emergency Patient Resources and Options (EPRO) service. EPRO is staffed 24/7 by Group Health physicians and registered nurses, and offers immediate toll-free access – 1-800-337-3197 — to Group Health resources, including:

- 24/7 access to prospective benefit and coverage determination to assure services recommended or arranged will be covered by Group Health. We can also help identify if a Group Health member has other health care coverage to provide coinsurance.
- Arrangement of safe alternatives to inpatient admission including:
  - Placement in skilled nursing facility, when available.
  - Safe discharge home with home health visits arranged.
  - Safe discharge home with home infusion services.
  - Safe discharge with assistance to arrange necessary next day appointments.
- Comprehensive access to Group Health medical records, including lab results, medication lists, radiographs and EKGs, when records are in the Group Health electronic medical records.
- Complete coordination of transfers for higher level of care or repatriation to Group Health contracted hospitals.
- In situations when Group Health does not cover services, EPRO can assist with placement in long term care, respite, etc.
We recognize that our hospital partners are on point to treat medical emergencies and EPRO is here to help. With the health care tide changing and Medicare poised to bring greater scrutiny and less payment of readmits, this is an ideal time to expand our program to better support our health care partners—so together we can deliver appropriate and cost-effective alternatives for our patients.

As always, our goal is to work together with our hospital partners to enhance patient outcomes, reduce unnecessary costs, and make best use of limited health care dollars. For additional details about EPRO, please refer to the brief Q&A attached. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Regards,

(signature)  (signature)
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Enc/ Frequently Asked Questions
Frequently Asked Questions about Group Health’s Emergency Patient Resources and Options (EPRO) Program

Q: How do I get in touch with EPRO?
A: Dial our toll free number: 1-800-337-3197. EPRO is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.

Q: Who staffs EPRO?
A: EPRO is staffed by an experienced emergency care physician, registered nurses and care management staff. The team is specially trained to provide current coverage and benefit information, real-time access to Group Health medical records, and coordination of our resources to serve the patient.

Q: What information will be requested when I call?
A: EPRO staff will need the patient’s Group Health member number, or name and date of birth. They also need to know when the patient arrived in your emergency department, what the initial vital signs were, and what the chief complaint is. In cases where inpatient admission is being considered or planned, our EPRO physician will request to speak with the attending E.D. provider.

Q: Can EPRO provide dollar-specific information about how much Group Health will pay for services or what a patient’s financial responsibility is?
A: EPRO cannot adjudicate claims, and therefore cannot predict allowable amounts. However, EPRO can provide benefit and plan structure information regarding patient cost shares, deductibles, and in-network versus out-of-network benefits.

Q: Can EPRO help an E.D. social worker with patient placement?
A: Although EPRO does not have a social worker on staff, EPRO nurses will handle skilled nursing facility placement for patients who meet criteria, and can assist with preparation for custodial placement.

Q: Can EPRO arrange follow-up visits with specialists?
A: Yes, EPRO staff can offer assistance.

Q: What is “repatriation?” Why is this cost-effective?
A: “Repatriation” is the term Group Health uses when patients are being moved from a hospital that is not part of our network to one where we have a contracted agreement in place, and where our providers have privileges to practice.

Our experience is that using our coordinated approach to care—in designated facilities where systems are established to support this approach—yields as good or better outcomes and high levels of customer satisfaction. In addition, overall lengths of stay are lower, as are episodes of readmission, and handoffs to post-hospitalization care are smoother with fewer complications.