

# Memorandum

To: Gold Coast Health Plan Primary Care Providers

From: Kim Timmerman MHA, CPHQ, Director of Quality Improvement  
Nancy Wharfield, M.D., Chief Medical Officer

Re: **Appropriate Testing for Children with Pharyngitis (CWP)  
Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) Measure**

Date: December 13, 2018

Antibiotic resistance is an urgent public health threat. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 30 percent of antibiotics – 47 million prescriptions – are prescribed unnecessarily in the U.S.

With winter comes an increase of patients with colds, viruses, and sore throats who often expect to leave a provider visit with a prescription of antibiotics to cure their illness. As you know, antibiotics don't always treat common bacterial infections and won't treat viruses. Rather, those who take them can have immediate symptoms such as nausea and diarrhea or can develop long-term negative side effects such as antibiotic resistance.

The CDC and the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) advocate for health care professionals to improve the way they prescribe antibiotics to help keep patients healthy, fight antibiotic resistance, and ensure that these life-saving drugs will be available for future generations.

## **Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) Measure Description**

Gold Coast Health Plan (GCHP) evaluates the Appropriate Testing for Children with Pharyngitis (CWP) measure annually. This measure evaluates the percentage of children, 3 to 18 years of age, who were diagnosed with pharyngitis, were dispensed an antibiotic, and received a group A streptococcus (strep) test for the episode. A higher rate represents better performance (i.e., appropriate testing).

The CWP measure is meant to reduce the inappropriate use of antibiotics by requesting that providers follow clinical practice guidelines that recommend that children infected with group A streptococcus be treated with antibiotics based on appropriate lab tests.

## GCHP's CWP Rates

The table below shows that GCHP's annual rates for the CWP measure have been very low. According to the National Committee for Quality Assurance's (NCQA) national percentile ranking, these scores rank in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile. Although the 2017 measurement year has increased from 2016, the continuous low rate indicates lower utilization of appropriate strep testing in children diagnosed with pharyngitis.

Measurement Year	2014	2015	2016	2017
CWP Rate	41.49	51.46	59.46	↑ 60.46

## Recommendations for Appropriate Strep Testing

The CDC has developed a program, "Be Antibiotics Aware: Smart Use, Best Care," to educate patients about and assist providers in the appropriate use of antibiotics. [Click here](#) for information about the CDC's Be Antibiotics Aware program. The CDC website has other educational resources on antibiotic use and resistance that include printable materials and references for both providers and patients.

The CDC has also provided important information on the Group A Strep for clinicians. [Click here](#) to read it.

## Additional HEDIS® Resources

GCHP has a tip sheet on its website with coding information for the CWP measure. [Click here](#) to read it or go to [www.goldcoasthealthplan.org](http://www.goldcoasthealthplan.org) > Providers > Resources > HEDIS® > HEDIS® Measure: Appropriate Testing for Children with Pharyngitis (CWP).

If you have any questions about the CWP Measure, please contact GCHP's Quality Improvement Department at [hedis@goldchp.org](mailto:hedis@goldchp.org).