

## **Medical Spine Center Operational FAQs -**

***Are there required evaluation elements identified for the Medical Spine Center that would be included in the consultation to the referring physicians and/or spine surgeons?***

Yes. [Elements of Evaluation](#) are available on the Medical Spine Centers tab on [Health Partners Back Pain](#) page or copy/paste [healthpartners.com/backpain](http://healthpartners.com/backpain) into your browser.

***Would a Designated Medical Spine Center Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant be able to do the MSC evaluation?***

One of the requirements is that the supervising physician (PM&R/OccMed) must be physically present and supervise if part of the evaluation is done by a Physician Assistant. Nurse practitioners would not be eligible to do the evaluation

***Which depression screen is to be done by the Medical Spine Specialist? Is it the PHQ2, and if that fails the PHQ9?***

ICSI's Adult Back pain guideline outlines several assessment tools and recommends PHQ-2 or PHQ-9 as the standard for the risk of depression.

***Where can I find an example of the PHQ-2 or PHQ-9?***

A sample of the PHQ-2 or PHQ-9 is found in Appendix B of the [ICSI Adult Back Pain Guideline](#)

***Which version of the Oswestry is accepted? Is modified, revised or neck acceptable?***

Any version of the Oswestry Disability Index.

***Where can I find an example of the Oswestry Disability questionnaire?***

Oswestry forms are available the first tab on [Health Partners Back Pain](#) page. (Both an English and Spanish version) A sample of the Oswestry Disability questionnaire is found in Appendix F of the [ICSI Adult Back Pain Guideline](#)

***How have you communicated this to members? Can I give them the Fast Facts?***

The Fast Facts is a newsletter written for providers. We have an overview of the Medical Spine Center approach and answers to frequently asked questions on the Member/Patient website. (See link below)

### **Member Information**

[HealthPartners Designated Medical Spine Centers and Specialists Network](#)

OR

1. Type [healthpartners.com](http://healthpartners.com) in your browser
2. Click on *Health & Wellness* tab on the very top right of the page
3. Click on *Low back pain* in the middle of the page
4. Scroll to the last paragraph at the bottom of the page for Designated MSC Network  
Click on [here](#) for more information

***Do you have any handouts that I can give to my patients that helps explains why I'm sending them to seeing a Medical Spine Center?***

Yes. An educational [Medical Spine Specialist Evaluation Handout](#) provides quick answers to questions your patients may be asking when sending them to a Medical Spine Center.

***Has there been any decision on the Preferred Spine Injection Network?***

We will be addressing new applications and renewals in the first quarter of 2012

## **Spine Surgery Consult Visit FAQs –**

### ***What form do I use to prior authorize my surgical consult visits and where do I find it?***

You would use the following link [Spine Surgery Consult Visit Prior Authorization Form](#) which is found under “Forms for Providers” on the provider website Or

- a. Go to **HealthPartners.com**
- b. Scroll to bottom of the page and click on “Provider Website” in the last column on the lower right side of the page
- c. Look for “Forms for Providers” on under the Purple “PROVIDER” column on the left side of the page.
- d. Scroll down to *Medical Policy* section
- e. Look for *Spine Surgery Consult Visit Prior Authorization Form*

### ***What is the turnaround time for the Plan to get back to the Surgical Spine doctor's office after the prior auth request has been sent to the Plan?***

Every effort will be made to do this as efficiently as possible. In most cases we anticipate the authorization will be turned around in 1 to 2 working days. An “approved” or “denied” authorization will be faxed to the surgical practice with 24 hours of the decision.

### ***What if there is a delay in scheduling the patient for their first spine surgery consult visit after I've received the approved prior authorization – is there a time limit for that authorization?***

The length of the authorization will be up to six (6) months following the original date of the approval. A second Prior authorization will be require if the initial surgery consult visit is not scheduled within that six month period.

### ***What if we have a new patient that was scheduled in December for their first visit in February, do we need to ensure they are seen by a MSC and complete a prior authorization?***

All new patients that were scheduled prior to January 1, 2012 for their first office visit, the MSC evaluation and consult visit prior authorization are not required.

### ***What if we have a new patient that was scheduled in December for their first visit in February, do we need to ensure they are seen by a MSC and complete a prior authorization?***

All new patients that were scheduled prior to January 1, 2012 for their first office visit, the MSC evaluation and consult visit prior authorization are not required.

### ***Some patients will come back to us just because we did their first surgery. What are you defining as the “first office visit”?***

Those patients that have been referred to you for the first time or patients that have not been seen for continuous non-surgical care in the previous six months – between July 2011 through December 2011 are considered new or first office visit. If the patient was evaluated by a Medical Spine Center within the previous 6 months (July 2011 through December 2011), a repeat evaluation is not necessary.

### ***What if the Spine Surgeon has been managing an established patient's back pain with conservative nonsurgical treatment and now surgery is an option? Does the patient need to have the MSC evaluation?***

No, an established patient is not required to be evaluated by a Medical Spine Center if they have receiving continuous non-surgical care with the spine surgeon for their low back pain during the July 2011 through December 2011 period.

***We do follow-up on established post-op surgical patients often at six months, nine months and one year after surgery depending on the case. Do they need to see a MSC before coming to these scheduled post-op visits?***

This is not their first surgical consult visit. Post-operative visits would not need a prior authorization.

***When the surgeon determines he would like to see films (either plain or an MRI) as following their post-op visits, does the patient need to go to a particular imaging center to get these done?***

Yes. Surgeon may use any HPI contracted imaging provider. There may be differences in what your patient will have to pay for co-pays or coinsurance depending on where you send them. Recommend that benefits and coverage be verified.

***What if the surgeon wants the patient to see an orthotics group for a brace or go to get physical therapy, do we send the patient back to the designated medical spine center for these services or can the surgeon refer the patients on his own?***

There would be no change from present pattern. The surgeon may use any HPI contracted provider for orthotics or PT services. Recommend verification of the patient's benefits and coverage.

***What about patients who already have an existing relationship with an orthopedic or neurosurgeon?***

The surgeon must still obtain prior authorization for the first surgical consultation visit. HealthPartners will evaluate the request and take into consideration whether the patient has already had surgery or not. If not, we would require evaluation in a Medical Spine Center prior to receiving further care with a surgeon

***Is there a list of all the individual physicians in the various groups in the Medical Spine Center so that we can easily identify that the HealthPartners patients have followed the new process?***

The designated network is at the practice level not the individual physician. The [Spine Surgery consult Visit Medical Review form](#) will ask for the designated Medical Spine Center [practice] name.

***Would a Spine Surgery practice be eligible to apply as a Medical Spine Center?***

Medical spine centers applications are for PMR, Occupational Medicine, Sports Medicine, or medical physician with advanced training and expertise in nonsurgical management. An active or retired Spine Surgeon would not be eligible.

***What is the grace period during which Claims will not deny our surgical consultations?***

Prior authorization for the surgical consult visit is required for all surgical consult visits beginning 1/1/2012. We will be calling surgical groups to discuss the lack of PA for their visits starting the end of January through February.

***What if the patient schedules a visit for a second opinion?***

If a patient has seen an MSC and wants a second opinion after seeing a spine surgeon, they do not need an additional MSC visit. Both spine surgeons are required to PA the consult visit.

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## **Resources**

***Is there a handout to give to patients being referred to a Medical Spine Specialist for an evaluation?***



Yes. The Medical Spine Specialist Evaluation patient handout is a quick one page questions and answers that patients would ask when being referred to a Medical Spine Center for an evaluation. The handout is available on HealthPartners [Back Pain Page](#) under Patient resources on the Medical Spine Center tab.

***Is there a central location for MSC and Spine Surgery information?***

Provider information including policies, authorization request forms, listing of medical spine centers, etc can be found by clicking on the link below:

**Provider Information**

[Back Pain Page](#) or copy/paste [healthpartners.com/backpain](http://healthpartners.com/backpain) into your browser

Patient information can be found by clicking on the link below:

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