



March 26, 2014

Dr. Jonathan Woodson
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
TRICARE Management Activity
1200 Defense Pentagon Room 3E1070
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Dr. Woodson:

We the undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) are writing to express our concern over TRICARE's non-coverage of over 100 laboratory developed tests, such as tests for Fragile X syndrome, Cystic Fibrosis, Spinal Muscular Atrophy, and numerous common cancers. These tests are critical to the diagnosis and treatment of many diseases and conditions, several of which are associated with mental or physical disabilities, and often represent the standard of care by professional society guidelines. TRICARE's lack of coverage of these vital healthcare services places TRICARE out of step with other government programs and commercial health insurance, resulting in inferior care for TRICARE beneficiaries.

CCD is a coalition of over 100 national consumer, service provider, and professional organizations which advocates on behalf of people with disabilities and chronic conditions and their families. It is our understanding that prior to January 2013, these diagnostic tests were covered by TRICARE for all beneficiaries, regardless of where care was accessed. Subsequently, despite a long history of coverage, payment for these tests was suddenly and without notice denied for beneficiaries obtaining care from the civilian provider network, but coverage continues for testing obtained through the Military Treatment Facilities. We have serious concerns with this two-tiered coverage policy for all TRICARE beneficiaries, but particularly for those with disabilities, who frequently obtain care in their communities through the civilian provider network because they lack ready access to Military Treatment Facilities.

While we appreciate recent comments by Defense Health Agency officials acknowledging the problems that have been created by TRICARE's non-coverage of these tests, we remain greatly concerned about the delay in reinstating coverage for these critical services. We believe it is imperative that this coverage issue is resolved immediately.

We also encourage TRICARE to collaborate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in utilizing and implementing a science-based evidence approach to the screening of disorders such as Fragile X syndrome and Cystic Fibrosis. For example, the CDC National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) implements a Fragile X syndrome program which includes uniform screening protocols.

Given their sacrifice to our nation, our military and their families deserve the very best, regardless of where they obtain health care services. We urge you to reinstate coverage for these important diagnostic tests before beneficiary access is further compromised.

If you have any questions, please contact any of the co-chairs of the CCD Veterans and Military Families Task Force listed below:

Veterans and Military Families Task Force Co-Chairs:

Heather Ansley, hansley@vetsfirst.org

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Susan Prokop, susanp@pva.org

Sincerely,

ACCSES

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association on Health and Disability

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autism Speaks

Brain Injury Association of America

Easter Seals

Epilepsy Foundation

Mental Health America

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)

Paralyzed Veterans of America

The ARC

VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association