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June 29, 2009

Jackie S. Rowles, CRNA, MBA, MA, FAAPM
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
Office of Federal Government Affairs
25 Massachusetts Ave
Suite 550
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Jackie S. Rowles,

I have received your letter expressing concern regarding Wellmark's policy pertaining to the coverage of Anesthesiologist services during routine endoscopy.

Your concerns are noted and Wellmark considers your comments to be valuable in the policy development process.

Wellmark is in agreement that routine endoscopy performed with propofol sedation may likely result in a more comfortable endoscopic experience than with traditional conscious sedation most commonly provided with endoscopy.

The fact remains the vast majority of screening endoscopies are performed with conscious sedation provided by the endoscopist. There is no evidence to suggest that screening rates are impacted by choice of sedation nor is there evidence that detection rates are improved with propofol use.

Wellmark will cover the services of an anesthesiology provider for the circumstances listed in the policy. These clinical scenarios are consistent with the recommendation of gastroenterologists nationally.

Given the increasing healthcare affordability concern nationally, we must all play our part in providing efficient, evidence based care. While we recognize that a more tolerable endoscopy experience is desirable, the outcome differential (or lack thereof) does not justify the incremental multi-million dollar expense Wellmark has experienced as a result of this practice.

Sincerely,


Paul Karazija, M.D.
Vice President / Chief Medical Officer