

TO: Kate McEvoy
Representative Cathy Abercrombie
Representative Michelle Cook
Representative Hilda Santiago
FROM: Sandra Carbonari, MD
DATE: October 24, 2016
RE: Notice to HUSKY Members letter

Via Email

I still have concerns about the “Notice to HUSKY Health Members” regarding PCMH+. My understanding is that his letter is meant to explain the program to clients and to inform them that they will be enrolled unless they actively opt out. The explanation is not clear, especially for those who have limited understanding of the health care system and limited literacy. It implies that not choosing PCMH+ will result in not getting the services they need. However, what is very clear is the warning that the patients need to watch out because doctors will get extra money for not providing the care the patient needs. It is also very clear that the HUSKY program does not trust its doctors.

This warning is gratuitous and offensive. If there is such a level of concern about doctors being corrupt then DSS should reconsider shared savings. If there is a subset of providers who are causing concern, then it would make more sense to address the issues with them directly rather than risk losing doctors who have been providing excellent care for HUSKY patients. This letter spotlights the lack of any positive, trusting relationship between DSS and the doctors who care for HUSKY patients.

As I have noted repeatedly in our meetings, a doctor faced with a family who does not have enough food or adequate housing does not check what insurance the patient has before offering help. Is it your intention that each practice has different sets of standards of care for patients depending on their insurance? That would mean that the care offered to the patient would change if and when their insurance changes. This is not only unethical, but also impossible to implement in a normal, busy practice. To imply that doctors will change the way they practice medicine and interact with families because of some possible financial reward at some unspecified time in the future is insulting.

I understand the concern about under service of HUSKY patients. However, I don’t see how these dire warnings will improve their health literacy or outcomes. Instead, patients may be unnecessarily alarmed when they are not offered the latest drug or medical test advertised on television or recommended by Google. Of course, patients should ask questions and get good answers. However, if the answer is that a drug or test is (appropriately) not needed, this letter would lead the patient to believe that the doctor’s decision was based on money, not good medical care.

This letter, as the final product of so many meetings, is a real disappointment. It is distressing to be characterized as the “bad guy” about whom the patients must be warned. I hope the offensiveness of this letter does not prompt doctors to withdraw from the PCMH program.

Sandra Carbonari