



# HealthAmerica Questions and Answers

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q.1 Is prior authorization required for emergency situations?**

A.1 No. Patients who are directed to the Emergency Room or Urgent Care Facility are exempt from prior authorization. It is not necessary for anyone to call NIA retrospectively to authorize any imaging procedure performed during an Emergency Room visit.

### **Q.2 What kind of response time can ordering physicians expect for prior authorization?**

A.2 The best way to increase the possibility of having a request approved *on line* through [www.RadMD.com](http://www.RadMD.com) or at the time of the first call *through the toll-free number* is to have knowledge of the case including:

- The patient' history and diagnosis
- Reason for the study
- Findings on physical examination
- Results of previous imaging studies, and
- History of medical or surgical treatment

Approximately 60-65 percent of the requests are being approved *on line* or during the initial phone call. Generally, within 2 business days after receipt of request, a determination will be made. In certain cases, the review process can take longer if additional clinical information is required to make a determination.

### **Q.3 Where can I find NIA's Guidelines for Clinical Use of Diagnostic Imaging Examinations?**

A.3 NIA's Diagnostic Imaging Guidelines for clinical use of examinations can be found on NIA's Web site at [www.RadMD.com](http://www.RadMD.com).

### **Q.4 Can NIA handle multiple authorization requests per contact?**

A.4 Yes.

### **Q.5 Why is NIA asking for a date of service when authorizing a procedure? Do physicians have to obtain authorization before they call to schedule an appointment?**

A.5 At the end of the authorization process, NIA asks where the procedure is being performed and the anticipated date of service. The exact date of service is not required. Physicians should obtain authorization before scheduling the patient.

### **Q.6 For how long is an authorization number valid?**

A.6 The authorization number is valid for 90 days from the date of the initial request. When a procedure is authorized, NIA will use the date of the initial request as the starting point for the 90 day period in which the examination must be completed.

### **Q.7 What if my office staff forgets to contact NIA and then goes ahead to schedule an imaging procedure requiring prior authorization?**

A.7 It is important to notify office staff and educate them about this new policy. This policy will be effective December 1, 2009. Claims for CT/CTA/CCTA, MRI/MRA, PET Scans, Stress Echo, Nuclear Cardiology and Diagnostic Nuclear Medicine procedures that are not prior authorized will not be paid, and the members must be held harmless. Please note that the rendering facility may refuse to schedule the study until an authorization has been obtained.

### **Q.8 Can the rendering facility obtain authorization in the event of an urgent test?**

- A.8 Yes, if they begin the process NIA will follow-up with the ordering physician to complete the process.
- Q.9 What does the NIA authorization number look like?**
- A.9 The NIA authorization number consists of 8 or 9 alpha-numeric characters.
- Q.10 If two authorization numbers are associated with the patient encounter, which one should be printed on the claim?**
- A.10 Any of the two authorization numbers should appear on the claim form. The authorization number not entered on the claim form will be captured internally within the claims system.
- Q.11 Is an NIA authorization number needed for a CT-guided biopsy?**
- A.11 No, these do not require prior authorization.
- Q.12 Which PET scans require prior authorization?**
- A.12 All **outpatient** PET Scans require authorization by NIA.
- Q.13 What happens if a patient is authorized for a CT of the abdomen, and the radiologist or rendering physician feels an additional study of the pelvis is needed?**
- A.13 The radiologist or rendering physician should proceed with the pelvic study. If this occurs, either the radiologist or rendering physician can call NIA with the information and clinical rationale to begin the process and NIA will follow-up with the ordering physician to complete the process or he/she should notify the patient's ordering physician of the additional test on the same day, as a matter of courtesy and appropriate medical procedure. The original ordering physician should then call NIA after the study is provided to proceed with the normal review process to get an additional authorization number.
- Q.14 If a patient needs a CT in preparation for radiation therapy, is prior authorization necessary?**
- A.14 No, these do not require authorization.
- Q.15 Is prior authorization necessary when HealthAmerica is not the member's primary insurance?**
- A.15 **Yes.** HealthAmerica's prior authorization requirements apply when HealthAmerica is the primary and secondary insurer.
- Q.16 Can a chiropractor order images?**
- A.16 Yes.
- Q.17 How are procedures that do not require NIA prior authorization handled?**
- A.17 These should be handled as they are today.
- Q.18 If requesting authorizations through NIA's Web site and the request pends, what happens next?**
- A.18 You will receive a tracking number and NIA will contact you to complete the process.
- Q.19 Can RadMD be used to request retrospective or expedited authorization request?**
- A.19 No, those requests will need to be called into NIA's Call Center for processing.
- Q.20 Can I speak directly with a Clinical Reviewer or Physician (Peer-to-Peer) Level Reviewer?**
- A.21 Once the initial intake process is complete, you may request to be transferred to the clinical level of review. Initial intake information is necessary to determine member eligibility and to process the request.
- Q.22 What steps will the ordering physician take when the authorization is not given during the initial intake process (level 1).**

A.22 The case will be forwarded to NIA's clinical departments who will review the clinical information submitted. If needed, the clinical staff will request via fax, additional clinical information. This information can be faxed to NIA's dedicated clinical fax line. An ordering office might request a hot transfer to a nurse clinical reviewer (level 2) during the initial request, however, this should only be requested if the office has a clinician who can speak with NIA's nurses and who has additional clinical information that would support the requested study.

If authorization is still pending at the end of the initial call, it is not necessary for the ordering physician's office to remain on the line. If the authorization request still does not meet clinical criteria at the nurse review level, it will be escalated to physician review (level 3). At that point, the NIA physician may ask for more clinical information or request to have a peer discussion with the ordering physician.

**Q.23 If NIA denies prior authorization of an imaging study, do we have the option to appeal the decision?**

A.23 Yes, through normal appeal procedures as directed in the denial letter. If a physician does not agree with the decision made by NIA, the physician should request an appeal of the decision.

**Q.24 Can a facility access information on an approved authorization?**

A.24 Yes, approved authorizations can be viewed on [www.RadMD.com](http://www.RadMD.com). On the right side of the home page is a section where the facility may log on and check the status of the authorization. The facility may search based on the patient's ID number, patient name or if known, by the authorization number.