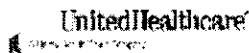





Labhoo.com - Business Wire Headlines



February 06, 2008 12:41 PM Eastern Time 

UnitedHealthcare Reaffirms Coverage of Propofol for Use in Colonoscopies

Encourages patients age 50-plus to get regular colon-cancer screenings

MINNEAPOLIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--UnitedHealthcare, a UnitedHealth Group (NYSE:UNH) company, announced it will continue to provide coverage for the drug propofol, when used as an anesthesia for colonoscopies, and for anesthesiologists to administer the drug during this examination.

The company reaffirmed its coverage policy in response to recently announced changes to payment policies by other health insurance providers.

"Getting recommended routine screenings can save lives. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 60 percent of deaths from colorectal cancer could be prevented if individuals age 50 and older were screened regularly," said Sam Ho, M.D., executive vice president and chief medical officer, UnitedHealthcare. "By covering propofol – an intravenous anesthetic that eases the discomfort associated with this procedure – and the anesthesiologist who administers the drug to ensure its safe usage, we are helping ensure that those members who require an anesthetic have access to this important colon-cancer screening procedure. Most people who undergo colonoscopies do not require an anesthetic; they have colonoscopies done with light sedation or, in some cases, no sedation at all."

To help determine its coverage policy, UnitedHealthcare reviewed current clinical literature and met with leading gastroenterologists and anesthesiologists to discuss safe and effective sedation for persons undergoing colonoscopy. Propofol is a useful anesthetic for persons with certain medical conditions that might otherwise make colonoscopy difficult. While it is administered intravenously, it is a true anesthetic, rather than a sedating agent, so the services of an anesthesiologist are required for its safe administration.

"UnitedHealthcare's policy leaves the decision surrounding colonoscopies and endoscopies to doctors and their patients," said Alfred D. Roston, M.D., president of the New York Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. "By reaffirming its coverage policy, UnitedHealthcare clearly demonstrates its support for office-based, anesthesiologist-supported colonoscopy as a safe, convenient and cost-effective way to provide a critical health service."

Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among Americans, according to the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The most recent statistics show that about 145,000 men and women are diagnosed with colorectal cancer every year – and nearly 54,000 will die from the disease.

About UnitedHealthcare

UnitedHealthcare (www.unitedhealthcare.com) provides a full spectrum of consumer-oriented health benefit plans and services. The company organizes access to quality, affordable health care services on behalf of more than 26 million individual consumers, contracting directly with more than 550,000 physicians and care professionals and 4,800 hospitals nationwide to offer them broad, convenient