

# METROMONITOR



The Provider Newsletter of  MetroPlus Health Plan, Inc.

## A Message from the Medical Director

*MetroPlus Health Plan is committed to providing high quality customer service to our members and to our providers. In trying to measure how successful we are annual consumer and provider satisfaction surveys are performed. We are pleased to share the results of these surveys with you in this issue of our newsletter and to especially highlight both areas of success as well as areas in need of improvement.*

*We are also asking you to join us in our initiatives to help smokers quit. Our staff is being trained to ask members about smoking habits and to intervene during telephone contacts. We ask that you question your patients on their smoking habits and provide counseling and referrals whenever possible to encourage quitting.*

*As always, I would like to thank you for the care you provide to our members and for being part of the MetroPlus network.*

Best Regards, Arnold Saperstein, M.D.

## Spotlight on Virgilina Gonzalez

Virgilina Gonzalez recently joined MetroPlus as Health Education Manager. In 1989 Virgilina began her career as a health educator directing a Peri-natal HIV Transmission project in a non-profit organization. As the Project Director she developed and coordinated health education intervention, with pre and post intervention assessments. In 1993, she joined the Elmhurst Hospital Center (EHC) staff as the Health Educator for the Family Care Practice. At EHC she provided direct patient care, coordinated health education activities, developed educational brochures, coordinated and provided orientation for new patients and coordinated community outreach activities. During her eight years at EHC, she also developed a literature and educational video library, chaired the Patient Family Education Committee and participated in the JCAHO survey preparation activities for the Family Care Practice and EHC.

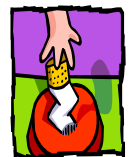
As Health Education Manager for MetroPlus, Virgilina is responsible for the coordination of outreach activities such as educational seminars and health fairs, the development of Member health education programs, the development and standardization of educational brochures and the production of a newsletter of health education events distributed throughout the MetroPlus Participating Provider network. She is also involved in the NYC Asthma initiative, the MetroPlus Asthma Van initiative, the Smoking Cessation Task Force and the 504 Form Project with the Board of Education, New York City Department of Health, and the North Brooklyn Asthma Action Alliance. Virgilina's plans for 2002 include the development of a diabetes care management program, a smoking cessation program, and educational brochures for hypertension, cholesterol, weight loss, healthy diet

and nutrition. She will also be working on creating linkages with the MetroPlus Participating Provider facilities' health education programs. This will enable MetroPlus to provide Members better access to programs available to them within our Participating Provider facilities. In addition, Virgilina's continued coordination of participation in community outreach events such as health fairs will include a screening component as well as educational information. The goal of all of these activities is to convey a message to Members that their health needs come first.

Please feel free to contact Virgilina at 212-597-8681 or email at [gonzav@nychhc.org](mailto:gonzav@nychhc.org).

## Helping Smokers Quit

On the 2001 CAHPS, 39% of adult Medicaid Member respondents reported they smoked, a slight decline from the previous year, and a significant amount less than the 53% average for Medicaid health plans in 2000. 87% of the 2001 adult survey respondents reported that they quit smoking for more than 6 months, a lower rate than that reported as 2000, but comparable to the 2000 Medicaid health plan average. In 2001, adult Members who responded reported that their physicians and other health care providers advised 62% of them to quit smoking, a rate better than the Medicaid health plan average. For assistance in helping Members to quit smoking, Providers may refer Members to the New York State Smokers' Quitline Stop Smoking Support program by calling 1-888-609-6292 (or fax 1-716-845-3042), or may call the Provider Relations Department for written member educational materials, office practice aids, and a comprehensive list of smoking cessation programs offered in each borough.



**We want to hear from you!** If you have ideas or suggestions for the next issue of the MetroMonitor please call the MetroPlus Provider Relations Department at 212-730-3206 or email [lonitM@nychhc.org](mailto:lonitM@nychhc.org).



## 2001 Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results

The MetroPlus 2001 Medicaid Consumer Satisfaction Survey, conducted using the National Committee for Quality Assurance Consumer Assessment of Health Plan Satisfaction (CAHPS 2.0H), has been completed. Child and adult member satisfaction with the overall health plan, the health care provided, the member's personal doctor and Specialist care were surveyed. The survey also measured five domains of member perception which included the member's ability to access needed care, ability to access care quickly, communication with the doctor, the courteousness and helpfulness of the doctor's office staff and the health plans customer service.



MetroPlus performance was better than industry benchmarks for child care satisfaction measures such as care provided by a child's personal doctor and/or specialist and reminders for check ups or shots. In the adult measures, health care provided by member's personal doctor and other health providers were better than the industry benchmarks. Some areas of concern and need for improvement remain from previous years. These include improving communication with the patient, regular and acute care appointment availability, and reducing waiting time at the office.

An area of special concern among Members is the courtesy and helpfulness of the doctor's office staff. In order to improve our performance and increase Member satisfaction in future years, please remember to expedite the care giving process as much as possible, enhance communication with members, empower members by explaining care concerns in an easily understandable manner, and encourage office staff to be courteous and helpful to patients.

Please also remember that MetroPlus does not require referral forms. The need for referrals to specialists was indicated as a source of member dissatisfaction for the child care measurements.

## Isoniazid with Vitamin B6 Supplementation

Pharmacy claims for the anti-tubercular drug Isoniazid (INH) submitted during January-April 2002 were reviewed to appraise compliance with practice guidelines. Analysis revealed that 20% of these claims were accompanied by a claim for Vitamin B6. Literature points to the fact that prolonged consumption of INH could cause Peripheral Neuropathy, a disorder resulting from deficiency of Vitamin B6 in the body. The Physician Drug Reference as well as the Center for Disease Control and the American Thoracic Society guidelines for the use of INH recommend the concomitant administration of Pyridoxine (Vitamin B6) especially in pregnant women, malnourished patients, persons predisposed to neuropathy, and



adolescents. Participating Providers should evaluate their patients for potential risk factors and follow the prescription guidelines for drugs known to cause harmful side effects to patients. Such instances provide an important opportunity to ensure the quality of care provided to our members.

## Internet Access to Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR)

Please note that Providers can now obtain a child's immunization history record and report immunizations given via the Internet. Call the Citywide Immunization Registry at 212-676-2323 to obtain a Provider log-in ID and Password.



## Medicaid Mandatory Generic Program Exemptions

As of Oct. 1, 2002, with few exceptions, our Medicaid Members will only be able to fill prescriptions generically even if the prescribing Provider requests brand name drugs. For exceptions, a formal request has to be made to the Pharmacy Committee of the New York State Department of Health.

## Community PCP Satisfaction Survey

As part of our ongoing efforts to ensure provider satisfaction, we recently conducted a community Primary Care Provider (PCP) satisfaction survey. Participating PCPs were asked to rate MetroPlus performance, relative to their experience with other managed care plans, in several different operational areas. PCPs were asked to rate MetroPlus performance in each area as Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor.

On average, MetroPlus performance was rated as "Good" in most operational areas. Nearly three out of four respondents rated their overall satisfaction with MetroPlus as either "Good" or "Excellent." Two areas noted for improvement were the availability of specialists in our network and the timely distribution of our Member roster.

In addition, PCPs were asked if they were aware of MetroPlus care management programs and if they would recommend these programs to their patients. These include the MetroMom program for prenatal patients, the AsthmaPlus program for asthma patients and the Partnership in Care Program for patients with HIV/AIDS. Nearly all respondents who were aware of these programs indicated that they would recommend them to their patients.

For more information on the results of the survey, please contact your provider relations representative. If you would like additional information on any of our care management programs, please call 212-597-8681.