AIM Specialty Pharmaceutical Management Program
Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why has Empire BlueCross BlueShield (Empire) adopted a specialty pharmaceutical management program?
Empire has implemented the specialty pharmaceuticals management program for certain members to enhance the appropriate use of specialty pharmaceuticals administered to members.

There are benefits from predeterminations:
- They help determine whether a specialty pharmaceutical may be harmful based on the member’s condition
- They help in suggesting the proper dosing for a specialty pharmaceutical

Specialty pharmaceuticals have become one of the primary contributors to the growth in total pharmaceutical utilization and cost trends. Utilization growth for specialty pharmaceuticals is driven by several factors:
- Introduction of new specialty pharmaceuticals
- Increased use of specialty pharmaceuticals for current and new indications
- Wider use of multiple-pharmaceutical therapy for some conditions

Spending for specialty pharmaceuticals are increasing by 20% each year. Unit cost growth for specialty pharmaceuticals is driven by:
- Price inflation
- Shifts toward newer, higher cost options in some therapeutic classes
- Increasing cost of multi-line therapies


2. Why is Empire transitioning its specialty pharmaceutical management program to American Imaging Management® (AIM®)?
AIM is a separate company that will provide utilization review services on behalf of Empire. This relationship combines the expertise of AIM with the strong local market presence of Empire, benefiting providers and members by enhancing service levels and offering technology tools that will improve the provider experience with our management programs.

AIM is a leader in specialty pharmaceutical management with a strong reputation for promoting clinical excellence, innovation, and provider service. AIM's programs are driven by a strong clinical foundation and deliver excellent service to providers through industry leading technology tools that enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the clinical review process.

3. Will there be any changes for those Empire members who are currently included under the specialty pharmaceutical management program?
No. Aside from the transition of the specialty pharmacy management program to AIM, there will not be any changes for Empire members who are currently included under the specialty pharmaceutical management program. Please note that the benefit plans listed directly below are not included under this program:
- National accounts
- NYS Benefit Management Program
- Federal Employee Plan (FEP)
- Hospital-only plans
- Medicare Advantage HMO and PPO plans

Services provided by Empire HealthChoice HMO, Inc. and/or Empire HealthChoice Assurance, Inc., licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans.
4. **What is the benefit of requesting a specialty pharmaceutical predetermination through AIM’s online portal?**
   The AIM online portal offers a full range of web-based services for physicians including real-time, 24/7/365 access for specialty pharmaceutical inquiries. Key services available through their portal include the following:
   - Obtain approvals on a real-time basis
   - Confirm predetermination requests for members referred for service
   - If approved, transfer predetermination requests directly to vendor to facilitate dispensing

5. **When will the transition of the specialty pharmacy management program to AIM begin?**
   For dates of service on and after October 31, 2011, all ordering providers should contact AIM to submit requests for a predetermination of specialty pharmaceuticals for those Empire members included in the specialty pharmaceuticals management program.

6. **What information is required from a provider to submit a predetermination request to AIM for specialty pharmaceuticals?**
   Please refer to the checklist below to ensure you have all the necessary information prior to requesting a predetermination of specialty pharmaceuticals:
   - Member’s identification number, name, date of birth, and health plan
   - Ordering provider information
   - Dispensing (servicing) provider information
   - Specialty pharmaceuticals being requested
   - Initial or Extension request
   - Patient diagnosis
   - Clinical symptoms/indications (intensity/duration)
   - Pharmaceutical dosing information
     For most situations, the above information will suffice. For complex cases, more information may be necessary, including:
   - Results of past treatment history (previous tests, duration of previous therapy, relevant clinical medical history)

7. **How does a physician office staff member submit a request to AIM for a predetermination for specialty pharmaceuticals?**
   For dates of service on or after October 31, 2011, ordering providers should begin contacting AIM to initiate predetermination requests for specialty pharmaceuticals. Providers will be able to make predetermination requests through the following processes:

   **Internet Requests**
   Online submission is available via AIM’s web-based application ProviderPortalSM. AIM’s ProviderPortal is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It is fully interactive, processing requests in real-time. The ProviderPortal may be accessed directly at www.americanimaging.net/specpharm. If you are already registered for ProviderPortal for Empire or another health plan, you do not need to re-register.

   **Telephone Requests**
   Requests can also be submitted to AIM via telephone. Providers can call AIM toll-free at 877-430-2288, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. EST to initiate a predetermination request for a specialty pharmaceutical or to verify that an order number has been issued.
8. I am a dispensing (servicing) provider, how can I determine whether a request for a predetermination of a specialty pharmaceutical submitted to AIM has been approved for a member?

Dispensing (servicing) providers may confirm approvals for predetermination requests online by logging on to AIM’s ProviderPortal at www.americanimaging.net/specpharm or by calling AIM toll-free at 877-430-2288.

9. How will requests for predeterminations of specialty pharmaceuticals be reviewed by AIM?

AIM will review predetermination requests for specialty pharmaceuticals based on Empire clinical criteria. These clinical criteria have been developed through a comprehensive review of leading, nationally recognized guidelines and literature regarding the use of specialty pharmaceuticals. A copy of the clinical criteria may be found on www.empireblue.com.

If the request for a predetermination is approved based on the information submitted by the ordering provider’s office, the provider will receive an order number, telephone call, and approval letter.

If the request for a predetermination cannot be approved immediately, the case will be forwarded to a nurse for additional clinical review. Nurse reviewers will request additional information regarding the case and have the authority to issue an approval if the information provided is consistent with clinical criteria.

In the event that the nurse reviewer is still unable to approve the request for a predetermination, it will be forwarded to a physician peer reviewer who will issue a determination on the request.

10. Will there be any changes to the list of covered specialty pharmaceuticals?

Yes, as of October 31, 2011, a full list of the specialty pharmaceuticals that are available for a predetermination and included under this specialty pharmaceutical management program can be found on our website – www.empireblue.com.

11. Is an order number necessary when Empire is not the member’s primary insurance?

No. An order number is not necessary.

12. What does the order number look like?

Specialty pharmaceutical order numbers are six (6) numeric characters.

13. How long is an order number valid?

An order number is valid for as long as the specialty pharmaceutical dosing period allowed under Empire clinical criteria. This timeframe varies by the specialty pharmaceutical. After an order number is issued, a telephone call will be made and an approval letter will be mailed to the provider and member, which will include the approved timeframe.

14. Can the online portal handle multiple requests for specialty pharmaceuticals per web transaction?

Yes, up to three (3) specialty pharmaceuticals may be requested per member at one time.

15. If my request for specialty pharmaceuticals is denied, is there an option to appeal the decision?

Yes, you may appeal through normal appeal procedures, as directed in the denial letter.

16. May I still request specialty pharmaceuticals via fax?

While the preferred methods for submitting specialty pharmacy requests are either online or by phone (see question 7 above), faxed requests will also be accepted. The fax number is 888-223-0550.
17. **Since this is a voluntary program, will I be penalized if I do not request a predetermination?**
   If you do not request a predetermination, the specialty pharmaceutical will be reviewed post-service for medical necessity. Copies of medical records may be requested for post-service reviews. **If the specialty pharmaceutical is denied post-service for medical necessity, under the terms of your participating provider contract, you will be financially liable for those services and members can not be balanced billed unless the member has signed Empire’s Non-Covered Services Waiver form prior to the provision of the service.**

18. **Will there be any change to the specialty pharamaceutical ordering process with this transition?**
   No, the ordering process will not change. For those pharmaceuticals that must be ordered through CuraScript pursuant to the terms of your participating provider agreement this will remain unchanged at this time.