

Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon ~ American Imaging Management®

Radiology Quality Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Radiology Quality Initiative (RQI)?

Regence's Radiology Quality Initiative (RQI) has been designed to promote appropriate use of advanced diagnostic imaging services through the application of widely accepted clinical judgment regarding these services. Regence has the following goals for this program:

- Promoting the selection of the most clinically appropriate diagnostic imaging services based on a patient's clinical needs
- Encouraging standardization of medical practice patterns and reducing variation in clinical evaluation through provider education and collaboration
- Curtailing the performance of inappropriate advanced diagnostic imaging studies
- Advocating bio-safety issues, including reduction of unnecessary radiation exposure
- Enhancing quality of health care for diagnostic imaging studies using evidence-based medicine and outcomes research from numerous resources

Regence has partnered with American Imaging Management (AIM®) to administer the program.

Why did Regence choose to partner with American Imaging Management (AIM)?

AIM is a leading imaging management company with national experience working with health plans and providers to promote the most appropriate use of advanced diagnostic imaging services. This promotion is done through the use of widely accepted clinical content and advanced analytical capabilities.

When did Regence's RQI begin?

On May 19, AIM's call center, 1 (877) 291-0509, and Web site, *ProviderPortal*_{SM} at www.americanimaging.net/goweb, became available for submission of order requests for imaging services occurring on or after June 1.

Program Design

What types of diagnostic imaging exams are covered under this program?

The RQI program covers the following services when they are performed in an outpatient, elective setting:

- Computerized Tomography (CT)
- Computerized Tomography Angiography (CTA)
- Nuclear Cardiology
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Magnetic Resonance Angiography (MRA)
- Positron Emission Tomography (PET) studies

A complete list of the Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes included in this program is available on the *ProviderPortal* Web site. The list will be updated by AIM as needed to reflect changes as published by the American Medical Association in the CPT manual.

What types of exams are excluded?

The following diagnostic imaging services are excluded from the AIM RQI program and will require review by Regence:

- Coronary Computerized Tomography Angiography (CCTA)
- Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (MRS)

- Virtual Colonoscopy

Imaging services provided in conjunction with emergency room visits, inpatient hospitalization, outpatient surgeries (hospital or free-standing surgery centers), or 23-hour observation are excluded from the program and do not require an order identification (ID) number.

Why is Regence focusing on advanced diagnostic imaging?

Advanced imaging is among the fastest growing clinical services in health care, increasing at an annual rate of 10% to 20% a year nationally. While the rapidly improving technology and clinical application of these services are the leading drivers of growth, it is widely accepted that some portion of this growth is due to procedures that are clinically unnecessary.

Given the potentially negative clinical implications of unnecessary testing, such as exposure to high doses of ionizing radiation, as well as the high costs of these tests, Regence is implementing the Radiology Quality Initiative to promote the appropriate use of these services.

Registration Process

How do I register for access to the RQI program?

Registration is easy – simply go to <https://www.americanimaging.net/goweb>.

How long does it take to obtain a user password after registering on AIM's Web site?

Beginning May 19, a password will be sent to the user within 24-48 hours after completing his or her registration.

Program Requirements

What are the requirements for this program?

Ordering/referring non-radiological physicians, other health care professionals and/or their trained staff must contact AIM to obtain an order ID number *before* scheduling an elective outpatient diagnostic imaging procedure. Providers of procedures covered under the RQI program should confirm that an order ID number has been obtained prior to performing the procedure.

Am I required to participate in Regence's Radiology Quality Initiative?

Regence contracted providers are required to participate in all quality improvement initiatives and programs as indicated in their provider agreements.

Will I be able to be "gold-carded" from this program?

Regence is evaluating whether to offer an RQI gold-carding program. To be eligible for such a program, a provider will have had to demonstrate compliance with the RQI for a minimum of 12 months. This status and compliance will be taken into consideration in the event we move to a full utilization management program.

How is an order ID number obtained from AIM?

After registration, an ordering provider can:

- Follow the online process to request an order ID number, 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the **ProviderPortal** at www.americanimaging.net
- Call AIM at 1 (877) 291-0509

How does the Radiology Quality Initiative work?

Ordering provider offices will submit order requests through AIM's **ProviderPortal** at <https://www.americanimaging.net/goweb>, or through the AIM Call Center at 1 (877) 291-0509. The following information will be collected:

- Patient and ordering physician information
- Diagnosis
- Symptoms
- Exam type
- Treatment/clinical history
- Imaging Provider

If the information provided meets AIM's clinical criteria and is consistent with Regence's medical policy, the ordering provider office will be asked to select an imaging provider where the imaging study will be performed. An order ID number will then be issued.

What happens if the criteria are not met?

If all criteria are not met or additional information or review is needed, the case will be forwarded to a Registered Nurse (RN) who will use additional clinical experience and knowledge to evaluate the request against clinical guidelines.

If an order ID number still cannot be issued by the nurse reviewer, the case will be forwarded to an AIM Physician Reviewer (MD), who will contact the ordering provider directly to discuss the case and diagnostic imaging guidelines prior to issuing the order ID number.

AIM's *Diagnostic Imaging Utilization Management Program Guidelines* serve as a foundation for this discussion. These guidelines are available to download from AIM's Web site, **www.americanimaging.net**.

The Physician Reviewer can approve the case based on a review of information collected or through his or her discussion with the ordering physician or other health care professional. In the event that the AIM Physician Reviewer cannot approve the case based on the information previously collected, is unable to reach the ordering provider to discuss the case, or is unable to approve the case based on the information supplied by the ordering provider during the peer-to-peer discussion, the Physician Reviewer will issue an order ID number for the requested service. The service will be recorded as having received an order ID number without meeting program criteria.

How long is the order ID number valid?

Order ID numbers are valid for 30 days after the date of issue.

Does AIM need to know when the procedure is scheduled?

No, although the order ID number should be issued prior to scheduling the study, it is valid for 30 days from the date of issuance.

Can providers obtain order ID numbers on a retrospective basis?

No, providers must follow the process to obtain order ID numbers prior to performing diagnostic imaging services under this program.

How do providers contact AIM after-hours?

The *ProviderPortal* is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and helps ordering providers and staff quickly and efficiently submit and verify order requests for Regence members via the Web site at **www.americanimaging.net/goweb**.

Other Questions

Which members are included in the Radiology Quality Initiative?

The Radiology Quality Initiative currently applies to all Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon and Regence BlueShield commercial business, FEP and ASO groups, including Regence MedAdvantage.

Will members be able to contact AIM?

Members should contact Regence Customer Service if they have any questions about the Radiology Quality Initiative or their benefits. Phone numbers are indicated on the back of their member cards.

What is the imaging providers' role in the Radiology Quality Initiative?

Imaging facilities are strongly encouraged to verify that an order ID number has been obtained prior to scheduling the study. If an order ID number is not obtained, the facility may experience claims and non-compliance reporting impact.

I am a hospital-based imaging provider. Does this program apply to me?

Hospital-based imaging providers are strongly encouraged to verify that an order ID number has been obtained prior to scheduling the study.

- Hospital-based radiologists who only provide professional services are not required to request an order ID number for the Radiology Quality Initiative.
- Non-radiology specialists will be required to request an order ID number for outpatient elective advanced imaging services regardless of their affiliation with a facility or practice.
- Inpatient diagnostic imaging is not included in this program.

Is the ordering provider required to obtain an order ID number for an urgent case and how does he or she do this in the evening and on weekends?

Emergency room services do not require an order ID number. Outpatient elective diagnostic imaging services are typically non-urgent in nature. For those rare requests that are medically urgent and immediate imaging is required, providers should contact AIM through the Call Center at 1 (877) 291-0509 within two business days. After-hours requests can be submitted through the *ProviderPortal* at www.americanimaging.net/goweb.

Who develops the clinical criteria for the program?

AIM's guidelines for appropriate diagnostic imaging utilization have been reviewed and approved by National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) and American Accreditation HealthCare Commission (URAC) and are reviewed annually by:

- An independent Physician Review Board, including cardiologists, orthopedic surgeons, radiologists, neurologists and neurosurgeons
- Client Medical Directors
- Local Imaging Advisory Council (representing local physician communities)
- Physician Review Panels

What methods and resources are used in development of AIM's Clinical Practice Guidelines?

Development of AIM's *Diagnostic Imaging Utilization Management Guidelines* involves integration of medical information from multiple sources to support the reproducible use of high quality and state-of-the-art diagnostic imaging services. The process for criteria development is based on technology assessment, peer-reviewed medical literature, including clinical outcomes research and consensus opinion in medical practice.

The primary resources used for AIM's guideline development include:

- American College of Radiology (ACR) Appropriateness Criteria
- American College of Cardiology (ACC) Appropriateness Criteria
- American Heart Association (AHA)
- American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM)
- American Cancer Society
- American Academy of Neurology (AAN)
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
- Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR)
- Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
- National Guideline Clearinghouse

Is issuance of an order ID number a guarantee of claim payment?

No, the claim will be processed in accordance with the terms of a member's health care benefit plan.