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GIRL SCOUTS

Blues audit hospital stays

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM) has launched a new program to save up to \$180 million a year on health-care costs by further reducing the number of inpatient stays its members spend in the hospital.

"Audits we've made since February at 61 hospitals in the state show that one out of every four days of inpatient hospital care billed to the Blues, may be unnecessary," said Richard A. Fennel, the Blues vice president for corporate communications.

"We are working cooperatively with the more than 200 participating hospitals in the state to continue reducing this overuse of hospital services," Fennel said.

MAJOR PROBLEMS were:

- Delays in discharges.
- Continued use of overnight hospital stays when outpatient care was appropriate.
- Ineffective hospital programs to manage use of services.

Existing BCBSM cost-avoidance programs saved more than \$184 million in 1985. They discourage unnecessary or inappropriate services and encourage efficient delivery of health care.

The programs included same day surgery, pre-certification of non-emergency hospitalization, and limits on lengths of stay.

"However our audits still show that an average of 27 percent of all the days billed to BCBSM may be unnecessary, or non-acute. Our goal is to first reduce that to 12 percent as part of a step-by-step program designed to entirely eliminate unnecessary hospital days without adversely affecting quality of care," Fennel reported.

THE BLUES are urging hospitals to improve efforts to identify the programs or people responsible for the overuse of services and to launch an aggressive drive to change attitudes of physicians and patients about unnecessary hospital care.

"At the same time, hospitals will

identify potential quality of care concerns and expand existing cost-effective, quality-assurance programs to determine that the needs of patients are met," Fennel said.

Hospitals that already meet the initial 12 percent goal are encouraged to continue expanding and improving existing programs.

Approximately 20 more hospitals will be audited this year, and ultimately all community-based hospitals in the state will be reviewed.

The audits identify the percentage of non-acute days for Blue patients in each hospital reviewed. The hospitals are required to develop broad corrective plans to reduce percentages that exceed the program goal.

State delinquent tax haul rises

State Treasurer Robert A. Bowman announced that the new Michigan Automated Collection System (MACS) has collected more than \$30 million since the high-tech computer system began operating earlier this year.

The MACS system features state-of-the-art telephone and computer technology that enables telephone operators to contact as many as 3,000 individuals per day who owe the state delinquent taxes.

"The state paid \$7.5 million for the computer system, so MACS has recovered four times its cost in just nine months," Bowman said.

"The Michigan Automated Collection System has been a tremendous success. MACS has increased state revenue, thus easing the tax burden on the honest taxpayer who pays on time and in full."

The success of MACS, along with increased enforcement efforts by the Treasury Department, has increased

total delinquent tax collections by \$43.5 million from last year.

G.C. Services Corp., the nation's largest collection agency, operates the MACS system. The state Treasury Department supervises on-site activities and authorizes all enforcement actions such as liens and levies.

G.C. Services also contracts a similar collection system with the federal Internal Revenue Service at 31 sites nationwide and has increased

federal delinquent tax collections by 35 percent.

"Michigan is the first state in the nation to establish a completely automated collection facility staffed and operated by a private collection agency," Revenue Commissioner Susan Work Martin said. "This unique partnership between the public and private sector is increasing state revenue without adding state employees."

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