



MGMC Welcomes New Commander



William J Germann
Brig Gen, USAF, MC, CFS

I am excited and honored to return to Malcolm Grow Medical Center, where 20 years ago I trained as a Family Practice Resident. Medical practices may have changed in 20 years but priorities remain the same: improving access to patient-centered, high quality healthcare. I look forward to serving you, as well as the men and women of the 89th Medical Group, in the upcoming years.

Scheduling Specialty Appointments

TRICARE Access standards were designed to ensure timely health care for TRICARE Prime enrollees. Many patients are not aware that the access standards guarantee them a specialty appointment within 28 days from when a referral is placed by their Primary Care Manager (PCM). In addition, the standards ensure that patients should not have to travel greater than 40 miles from their home to obtain specialty care.

To schedule a specialty appointment patients must have a referral from their PCM, or from a specialist who wants their patient to see another specialist. Referrals are rarely hand written, but are entered electronically into a computerized system by the patient's PCM. Each referral must be authorized before an appointment can be booked. It takes approximately two days for a referral to be entered into the computer system and authorized.

When a PCM refers their patient for specialty care, the patient is instructed to wait 24 to 48 hours and then call for an appointment. A MGMC appointment call center agent will take the call and research the availability of appointments at MGMC first, followed by all local Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) within a 40-mile drive of the patient's home. If no appointments can be found at a military facility, within 28 days, the appointment agent is required to offer the patient an appointment with a specialist in the local TRICARE civilian network. The civilian network was developed to supplement the military health system when there is a shortage of military providers. The appointment agent will take the patients name and phone number and call them later in the week to book the civilian appointment.

Civilian appointments are booked on Wednesday through Friday and calls are answered in the order in which they were received. If the patient is willing to wait a little longer or drive a little farther to an



MTF, and they have the approval of their PCM, they can waive the access standards and see an MTF specialist.

When patients call for an appointment at Malcolm Grow, our goal is for them to speak directly to a call center clerk. We're happy to report that calls are currently being answered in under two minutes, which is less than half the hold time patients once experienced. Please understand, however, that on Mondays hold times may be as long as five minutes as this is the busiest day of the week. Patients can minimize hold-waiting times by calling later in the day and avoiding any calls on a Monday, if possible. People with acute problems typically call in the morning and most heavily at the beginning of each week.

At a recent Hospital and Community Crosstalk meeting, Brigadier General William J Germann, Commander, 89th Medical Group stated that his top three priorities for Malcolm Grow were Access to care, Access to care and Access to care and that the new facility motto was, "do today's work today". He stated that the Malcolm Grow staff will utilize every available means to ensure patients receive appointments in a timely and courteous manner.

For questions or compliments concerning the appointment process please don't hesitate to call 1Lt Eric Johnson, TRICARE Appointment officer at 240-857-0102. Your feedback is the vital link that will help us continue to improve our service and provide the highest quality medical care.

When it's more than Just A Bad Day

The holiday season is generally a happy time, but for some people it brings sadness. We've all had days when nothing seemed to go right, when problems seemed overwhelming and life seemed hopeless. How do you know when it's more than just a bad day? How do you know when it's depression?



Depression is an extremely common problem. It's estimated

that one in ten Americans experience depression each year. However, because many of the symptoms of depression are so common, people frequently don't realize they are depressed. To a large degree, it is often just part of life. In fact, depression has been called the "world's number one public health problem" because it is so prevalent and makes other pre-existing health problems even worse.

Depression is not a sign of personal weakness and it cannot be wished away. If you experience any of the following symptoms for two weeks or more it's important to talk with a health care professional.

- **Significantly sad, irritable, crying spells**
- **Sleep problems (too little/too much)**
- **Guilt, feelings of inadequacy or worthlessness**
- **Lack of interest in activities or people**
- **Poor energy/feeling tired most of the time**
- **Concentration/memory difficulties**
- **Appetite/eating changes**
- **More aches and pains or physical complaints**
- **Thoughts of death or suicide**

Your PCM can discuss treatment options for depression and, if necessary, direct you to a Behavioral Health Consultant (BHC). The BHC is a psychologist with specialty training who works as a member of the primary care team.

While active duty members must use their assigned PCM for all healthcare needs, active duty family members may use a network mental health provider if they would feel more comfortable with a civilian provider. Authorization is not required for the first eight visits to a network provider and the visits are free of charge. Retirees may also "self-refer" to a network provider for the first eight visits, at a cost of \$25/visit. Of course, Prime enrollees may always call the appointment line at, 1-888-999-1212, and make an appointment with a military mental health provider, directly.

The good news is treatment for depression can be very effective. Eighty to ninety percent of people are successfully treated with drugs, psychotherapy or a combination of the two. If you're feeling sad or depressed talk with a health care professional today about what kind of therapy is right for you.

IMPORTANT! Non Availability Statement Changes for OB Care

Until December 28, women who use TRICARE Standard/Extra and live within 40 miles of a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) must receive all their maternity care from that MTF, unless they have a Non Availability Statement (NAS). If an NAS is not obtained for prenatal visits, TRICARE will not cover any portion of the care received during the pregnancy.

An NAS is a certification from a military hospital stating that it cannot provide the requested inpatient care. A Health Benefits Advisor initiates this form. For pregnancy, an NAS is issued for all prenatal visits, the delivery itself and postpartum care for up to six weeks following delivery. The NAS must be requested prior to the first prenatal visit.

Beginning December 28, 2003 the NAS requirement will be eliminated as mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act of 2003. It's important to note, however, that all maternity care received prior to December 28 still requires an NAS. Even if a woman's first prenatal visit occurs on Dec 27, 2003 and she will not deliver until the following summer she must have an NAS. If she fails to get the required NAS she will be responsible for the entire out-of-pocket expense. Maternity care is reimbursed in a bundle, so the entire bill (hospital and professional fees) will not be covered if any prenatal care is received before December 28. This could result in beneficiaries having to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket if they do not have the required NAS.

For more information on NAS changes, visit the TRICARE website at tricare.osd.mil or call Sierra Military Health Services at 1-888-363-5433.



Privacy Release Form and Specialty Appointments

Question: I called the TRICARE office to make a specialty appointment for my wife but was told I couldn't do this without providing Sierra a release form signed by my wife. There's a Power of Attorney on file in her medical records and I've always been able to make primary care appointments for her in the past. Why can't I make a specialty appointment?

Answer: HIPPA regulations state that patients may not obtain information on family members, who are over the age of 18, without prior written consent from the individuals involved. Sierra requires a written release, which is annotated in their computer system before they can assist you with making a specialty appointment or releasing any information on individuals over age 18. Appointment agents do not have the ability to access medical records to locate an individual's power of attorney, however, if you stop by TRICARE with your power of attorney we can make a computer update on the spot and a release form will not be needed.

Primary Care appointments do not require a release because we make the appointments without providing any patient information. To make a specialty appointment, however, we have to release information about the referral, which the patient may not want you to have. Privacy release forms are available at the TRICARE Service Center or online at www.sierramilitary.com.



Health Net Federal Services Selected as North TRICARE Contractor

Three new TRICARE contracts were awarded on August 21, 2003. These contracts will replace the seven contracts currently in place and include: Health Net Federal Services for the North, Humana Military Healthcare Services for the South and TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corp for the West.

The transition period began on Sept 1 2003 with full implementation to begin in November 2004 for the North region. The TRICARE benefit will remain the same with the new contracts and the transition process will be seamless for patients. Beneficiaries should continue to file claims and enrollment forms with Sierra until the new contract is implemented in November.

Don't leave home without it

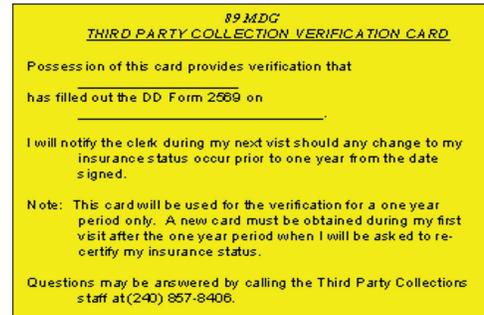
Civilian health insurance companies are mandated by law to reimburse the government for medical treatment provided to their customers who receive services at MGMC. The money received is put to good use - to purchase the latest medical equipment and to renovate the facility. Last year Malcolm Grow collected over \$2.5 million.

To help with the collections process, the Air Force requires all retirees, retiree dependents and active duty dependents to document whether or not they have private health insurance.

This is done by completing a "Record of Other Health Insurance" (DD Form 2569.) Patients are then mailed a "Yellow Card" which serves as proof they've completed the form.

When visiting clinics at Malcolm Grow, patients will be asked to show their yellow card. Those who do not have a card will need to complete another DD Form 2569. The benefit of having a yellow card is that it saves the inconvenience of having to document insurance information several times.

Next time you visit Malcolm Grow Medical Center, whether it's for a routine visit to a primary care clinic, to pick up a prescription or get an x-ray, don't forget your yellow card! For questions call 1Lt Kathy Knowles at 240-857-2476.



89 MDG
THIRD PARTY COLLECTION VERIFICATION CARD

Possession of this card provides verification that
has filled out the DD Form 2569 on _____.

I will notify the clerk during my next visit should any change to my insurance status occur prior to one year from the date signed.

Note: This card will be used for the verification for a one year period only. A new card must be obtained during my first visit after the one year period when I will be asked to re-certify my insurance status.

Questions may be answered by calling the Third Party Collections staff at (240) 857-8406.



Dear Malcolm Grow Prime Family

I would like to thank you for selecting us to meet your healthcare needs over the past year. It has been our pleasure serving you and we hope that you will continue to make us your healthcare team of choice.

From everyone at the 89th Medical Group, we wish you happy holidays and a prosperous and healthy new year!



WILLIAM J. GERMANN
Brigadier General, USAF, MC CRS
Commander, 89th Medical Group

