

Attorneys General to Insurers: Cover Acupuncture

By Editorial Staff

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U.S. attorneys general representing nearly 40 states / territories have taken an important step in combating the opioid epidemic, highlighting nondrug pain management options – and increasing insurance policies toward and coverage of acupuncture and other conservative treatment options.

The National Association of Attorneys General sent a letter, dated Sept. 18, 2017 and signed by 35 state attorneys general (and the attorneys general of the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), to Marilyn Tavenner, president / CEO of America's Health Insurance Plans. The letter requests Ms. Tavenner, whose organization represents an estimated 1,300 member companies that sell health insurance to more than 200 million Americans, "take proactive steps to encourage your members to review their payment and coverage policies and revise them, as necessary and appropriate, to encourage healthcare providers to prioritize non-opioid pain management options over opioid prescriptions for the treatment of chronic, non-cancer pain." Among the "effective non-opioid alternatives": acupuncture, massage, physical therapy and chiropractic care.

The letter goes on to state: "In the near future, working in conjunction with other institutional stakeholders (such as State Insurance Commissioners), we hope to initiate a dialogue concerning your members' incentive structures in an effort to identify those practices that are conducive to these efforts and those that are not. We hope that this process will highlight problematic policies and spur increased use of non-opioid pain management techniques."

Attorneys general whose signatures grace the Sept. 19 letter hail from Arkansas, Arizona, California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia and Wisconsin.