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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois First to Offer Bariatric Surgery Education Program to Help Improve Outcomes

Addition of EmmiHealth™ Guides Members to Make Informed Decisions

CHICAGO – August 7, 2006 – Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois has become the first health insurance company in the country to offer the EmmiHealth program, “Informed Decision Making for Bariatric Surgery,” to its members considering bariatric surgery. Developed by Chicago-based Emmi Solutions, LLC, EmmiHealth is a multimedia, Web-based program that provides people with clear, concise information about their medical condition, the risks and benefits of treatment, alternatives to surgery and what to expect before and after their procedure – information that collectively leads to better expectations about their care and better outcomes.

“Active patient involvement is key to addressing many health conditions,” said Stanley W. Borg, D.O., vice president, Clinical Operations, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois. “EmmiHealth is part of our efforts to help support our members in effectively evaluating the surgical options to manage their obesity.”

The demand for bariatric surgery, including gastric bypass and adjustable gastric banding, has increased more than 300 percent over the past five years. Current estimates provided by the American Society for Bariatric Surgery indicate that 175,000 to 200,000 weight-loss procedures will be performed in 2006. Additionally, a recent federal government study published in the journal *Medical Care* reports that 40 percent of patients who undergo weight-loss surgery develop complications within six months. The researchers also found that the complications can increase costs significantly – by an average of \$7,000 to \$35,000 per patient.

Through EmmiHealth, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois is taking a proactive approach to providing its members information about the possibility of postoperative complications and their associated costs. It also allows members to play a more active role in their care.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois has implemented an innovative approach to help support its members in making informed decisions about bariatric procedures. In addition to EmmiHealth, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois members considering bariatric surgery work with case managers who help them consider surgical options and prioritize their needs. They also receive information about provider practices and hospitals designated as “centers of excellence” in the specialty, which also helps them make decisions about their care.

“Studies have shown that well-informed patients translate into improved outcomes, reduced cost and greater satisfaction,” states Jordan Dolin, CEO, Emmi Solutions. “By offering EmmiHealth for members considering bariatric surgery, in addition to encouraging them to utilize case managers and consider care at centers of excellence, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois is encouraging the long-term success and well-being of its members.”

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, a Division of Health Care Service Corporation, a Mutual Legal Reserve Company (HCSC), is the largest health insurance company in Illinois. It began in 1936 as Hospital Service Corporation with the Blue Cross symbol officially adopted in 1939. Currently, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois provides health insurance coverage for 6.9 million people.

HCSC is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

About Emmi Solutions

Creator of the Emmi™ family of online patient education tools, Emmi Solutions is recognized as the market leader in interactive health care communications supporting better health care delivery. Emmi engages patients and their families and caregivers with easy-to-follow, actionable information so they can understand how to take control of a chronic disease and what to expect before, during and after surgery. The Emmi series is designed to manage patient expectations, improve patient safety, increase patient compliance and reinforce risk mitigation. To learn more, please visit www.emmisolutions.com

