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Date: 21 July 2015

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Psychologists: Scope of practice

The Council for Medical Schemes received enquiries with regard to the scope of practice of psychologists – specifically educational and industrial psychologists.

The specific enquiries originated as the medical scheme received and paid accounts from industrial and educational psychologists who treat patients for other clinical conditions including but not limited to Bipolar mood disorders, Major depression, Schizo-affective disorders including Paranoid Schizophrenia.

The enquiry from the medical scheme further asked guidance with regards to Circular 34 of 2011 which determined that medical schemes cannot use the PCNS as a mechanism for determining the kinds of services that will be reimbursed under psychology or any other discipline.

The BHF practice numbering system (PCNS) have a main discipline group number for psychology i.e. 086 however during 2011 BHF added various sub-disciplines that detail the type of psychology e.g. sub-discipline 001 is for a Clinical Psychologist.

Discipline	Sub-Discipline	Description Discipline	Description of Sub-Discipline
086	000	Psychologists	
086	001	Psychologists	Clinical
086	002	Psychologists	Counselling
086	003	Psychologists	Educational
086	004	Psychologists	Industrial
086	005	Psychologists	Neuropsychologists

The table above indicates the discipline group for all psychologists to be 086. The sub-discipline indicates the specific area of psychology that the provider is trained in.

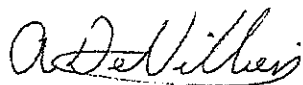
According to the scope of practice of psychologists as promulgated in 2011 the sub-disciplines/various types of psychologists are only allowed to provide the services for which they are registered. This entails that sub-discipline 003 (educational) psychologists may only perform the functions as stipulated in their scope of practice section.

The Council for Medical Schemes has discussed the scope of practice with various professionals and determined that a specific group of psychologists started legal proceedings against the Minister of Health for promulgating the 2011 Act. These proceedings are not finalised yet.

The CMS finally determined that the promulgated scope of practice of 2011 stands – until such time that the court case against the current promulgated Act has been finalised – all entities in the healthcare sector must comply with the Act and thus the scope of practice of certain provider disciplines.

In instances where providers have elected to obtain a PCNS, medical schemes may use the sub-discipline groups to determine the type of service provider and the services that are within the scope of practice of such provider. In the event that the provider does not have a PCNS number the scheme must use other means to confirm the scope of practice and if the services fall within the scope of practice the scheme must reimburse the member or the provider accordingly. The qualifications and area of practice is usually indicated on the accounts of service providers.

Benefits only have to be funded in accordance with the benefit schedules and PMB legislation and any service that is not covered by it does not have to be funded. The services rendered by Educational and Industrial psychologists are not covered in the healthcare benefits of most medical schemes; hence it does not have to be funded.



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