

March 20, 2020

[*Name, Degree*  
*Title*  
*Company*  
*Address*  
*City, ST Zip*]

Dear Dr. :

The COVID-19 public health emergency has created an unprecedented health crisis in our country. As a result of this global pandemic, rheumatology practices are facing extraordinary clinical and economic challenges. The ACR requests that [*Company Name*] consider the following measures to help alleviate some of this pressure on practices. Providing this temporary relief will allow our members to remain focused on patient care at this most critical time.

#### **Telehealth**

On March 17, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) introduced the 1135 waiver to expand access to telehealth services during the nationwide pandemic. UnitedHealthcare has also announced a temporary update to their telehealth services policy, in alignment with the guidance from CMS. The ACR applauds the leadership of CMS and UHC and we urge [*Company Name*] to take similar action and provide coverage for telehealth services irrespective of patient or provider location. Telehealth options are particularly important for rheumatology patients because the majority are immunocompromised and face greater health risks if exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

#### **Administrative Relief**

The ACR also requests that [*Company Name*] delay implementation of any policies that would increase administrative burden or disrupt patient care. This includes any changes to formularies or utilization management criteria, and any non-medical switching of therapies. As practices respond to the ever-changing nature of this crisis and its impact on their patients, it is critical that health plans avoid creating any additional confusion or uncertainty. We also ask that you consider temporarily removing prior authorization requirements to reduce the overall burden on practices and ensure all patients have timely access to care.

We appreciate your review of these concerns and urge [*Company Name*] to take action to support the providers who are on the front lines of this public health emergency. The ACR is available as a resource to discuss any changes that would provide relief and facilitate access to care. For more information or to schedule a call, please contact Meredith Strozier, ACR Director of Practice Advocacy at [mstrozier@rheumatology.org](mailto:mstrozier@rheumatology.org) or (404)633-3777.

Sincerely,

Chris Phillips, MD  
Chair, ACR Insurance Subcommittee