Eastern Connecticut Physician Hospital Organization Collaborates With Cigna to Improve Health and Lower Costs

MANCHESTER, Conn., May 07, 2015 - Cigna (NYSE: CI) has launched a collaborative care initiative with Manchester-based Eastern Connecticut Physician Hospital Organization, Inc. (ECPHO) that aims to improve patient access to health care, enhance care coordination, and achieve the goal of improved health, affordability and patient experience. With the launch of the ECPHO program, which became effective April 1, Cigna now has 11 collaborative care initiatives in Connecticut.

Cigna Collaborative Care is the company’s approach to accomplishing the same population health goals as accountable care organizations, or ACOs. The program with ECPHO will benefit more than 7,000 individuals covered by a Cigna health plan who receive care from more than 240 of ECPHO’s primary care doctors and specialists.

In places where it’s been introduced, Cigna Collaborative Care is helping to improve the health of Cigna customers while effectively managing medical costs. The programs are helping to close gaps in care, such as missed health screenings or prescription refills, reinforcing the appropriate use of hospital emergency rooms, increasing the number of preventive health visits and improving follow-up care for people transitioning from the hospital to home.

"What matters most to our doctors is having the opportunity to further improve the lives of our patients by providing the highest quality, well-coordinated care," said Edward Roberts, executive director of ECPHO & CINECT. "We’re pleased to collaborate with Cigna in this approach to health care, with its focus on value and improving the patient experience. Together we will deliver even better coordinated health care at a lower cost to the community."

"Through this type of collaboration we have the opportunity to help transform the health care delivery system," said Robert Hockmuth, M.D., Cigna’s senior medical director for Connecticut. "When we reward doctors for results and focus on prevention, wellness, health improvement and care coordination, we can create a system that works for everyone who uses, pays for or delivers health care."

Under the program, ECPHO will monitor and coordinate all aspects of an individual’s medical care. Patients will continue to go to their current physicians and automatically receive the benefits of the program. Individuals who are enrolled in a Cigna health plan and later choose to seek care from ECPHO will also have access to the benefits of the program. There are no changes in any plan requirements regarding referrals to specialists. Patients most likely to see the immediate benefits of the program are those who need help managing chronic conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

Critical to the program's benefits are the registered nurse clinical care coordinators, employed by ECPHO, who will help patients with chronic conditions or other health challenges navigate the health care system. The care coordinators are aligned with a team of Cigna case managers to ensure a high degree of collaboration between the physician group and Cigna, which will ultimately provide a better experience for the individual.

The care coordinators will enhance care by using patient-specific data from Cigna to help identify individuals being discharged from the hospital who might be at risk for readmission, as well as individuals who may be overdue for important health screenings or who may have skipped a prescription refill. The care coordinators are part of physician-led care teams that will help people get the follow-up care or screenings they need, identify potential complications related to medications and help prevent chronic conditions from worsening.
Care coordinators can also help individuals schedule appointments, provide health education and refer people to Cigna's clinical support programs, such as disease management programs for diabetes, heart disease and other conditions; and lifestyle management programs, such as programs for tobacco cessation, weight management and stress management.

Cigna will compensate ECPHO for the medical and care coordination services it provides. Additionally, the physician group may be rewarded through a "pay for value" structure if it meets targets for improving quality and lowering medical costs.

Cigna has been at the forefront of the accountable care organization movement since 2008 and now has 122 Cigna Collaborative Care arrangements with large physician groups that span 29 states, reach more than 1.3 million commercial customers and encompass more than 50,000 doctors, including more than 24,000 primary care physicians and more than 27,000 specialists.

About Cigna

Cigna Corporation (NYSE: CI) is a global health service company dedicated to helping people improve their health, well-being and sense of security. All products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of Cigna Corporation, including Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, Life Insurance Company of North America and Cigna Life Insurance Company of New York. Such products and services include an integrated suite of health services, such as medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, vision, supplemental benefits, and other related products including group life, accident and disability insurance. Cigna maintains sales capability in 30 countries and jurisdictions, and has more than 88 million customer relationships throughout the world. To learn more about Cigna®, including links to follow us on Facebook or Twitter, visit www.cigna.com.

About Eastern Connecticut Physician Hospital Organization

Eastern Connecticut Physician Hospital Organization (ECPHO) is the regional physician organization in the area known as "East of the River". Established in 2005, it is a joint venture between the Eastern Connecticut Health Network (ECHN) and the Eastern Connecticut Individual Provider Group (ECIPG). From its inception, the organization dedicated itself to meeting the evolving health care needs of the community. ECPHO's physician practices were early adopters of electronic health records (EHR). The majority of its primary care providers are certified as patient-centered medical homes (PCMH). Its physicians and advanced practice clinicians have worked with ECHN to establish a variety of local treatment options. In 2014 ECHN and ECIPG worked through ECPHO to establish the Clinically Integrated Network of Eastern Connecticut (CINET). CINET was established to be the vehicle to ensure quality, affordability and community satisfaction in accountable care.