

TURNER DENTAL GROUP

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I have been a dentist in private practice for more than 16 years. My entire career has been within the community I grew up in, currently live in and love with all my heart! I have, by choice, been a Medicaid provider since the beginning of my career. Originally, I joined the Medicaid network because it seemed like the “right thing to do”. Currently, about 20% of the patients in my practice fall under the Medicaid system. After all that is said, let me be clear; I am very close to leaving all the feel good, do the right thing mantra behind and leave the network, taking both of my associates with me.

In the beginning, state run Medicaid was much easier to accept than many private insurances and the payment rate was decent. When the system was run by the state, payment rates were slowly creeping up closer to private rates and the administrative costs for me were manageable. Claims were paid quickly and completely. This is no longer the case!

In the current three-payer, privately run system things have deteriorated to the point that many of my colleagues have left the network. I am on the verge of joining them. Payment rates have decreased; administrative costs have risen for me and the entire program is now actually costing me money! I am losing money out of my own pocket every time I treat a patient “covered” by Medicaid! I am a nice and giving person, I have treated (and will continue to in the short term) each and every patient in my practice in the exact same manner no matter what, if any, insurance coverage they may have. It is becoming beyond difficult to maintain that level of service with the current deplorable reimbursement rate of the Kansas Medicaid system.

Some examples of poor reimbursement are the following. Medicaid reimburses \$87.36 for a healthy adult prophylaxis, exam and 4 bitewings, Delta Dental reimburses \$134 for the same services. That means Medicaid pays at 65% of the Delta fee (which is one of the lowest paying insurances we accept). A child prophylaxis, exam, bitewings and topical fluoride treatment is reimbursed by Medicaid at \$93.12, Delta at \$141. Again, Medicaid is considerably lower at 66% of the Delta fees. Another very commonly required procedure is a one surface posterior composite restoration, Medicaid fee is \$67.20 or 51% of the \$133 Delta rate. For each molar root canal completed, we are paid \$336 by Medicaid. The Delta rate is \$628. These four examples were chosen because they are very frequently performed, but they are in no way the only fees with low rates. **All** the fees reimbursed by Medicaid are in the same category of downright ridiculous! My practice has overhead that runs 68-70%, this includes employee pay and benefits, utility bills, dental and office supplies, lease payments, among other expenses. This overhead percentage is absolutely in line with most dental offices. You can see that accepting a fee that pays 50 or 60% cannot pay the bills of a practice that has an overhead of 68-70%. I refuse to do what many of my colleagues in dentistry are doing, limit hours that Medicaid patients are seen in, treat Medicaid patients in different offices with lower overheads, use different/cheaper materials, utilize less technology with “these” patients. I won’t do it; therefore, I may be forced to withdraw from the Medicaid network. I can’t pay the bills at these rates!

I have heard some talk and banter about how cutting reimbursement rates won’t be *that* harmful because hospitals and corporations can absorb some loss. I am not the owner of a large corporation! My practice is busy, but not huge. I employ 20 people, all but two of which live right here in Kansas. I am finding it nearly impossible to continue to lose money on 20% of my patient base and run my business in a profitable manner. Not only does this practice help support the families of all 20 of my employees, it is the primary support of my own family. Without a substantial increase in reimbursement rates, I will not be able to continue as a Medicaid provider. I have reviewed the list of Medicaid providers and know that many of those doctors listed are not current providers and are not currently accepting new patients. I fear that many patients will soon be without access to quality dental care if the State of Kansas doesn’t make a big change!

Please don’t hesitate to contact me at my office 913.677.1004 or by email joshlaurahuyett@gmail.com if you would like any more information.

Sincerely-

Laura J Huyett, DDS