External Otitis Media
Prevention and Treatment

Overview
Since 2012, Superior has conducted retrospective reviews of pharmacy claims to help measure provider prescribing trends. Recent findings from these reviews have shown that otic antibiotic utilization is elevated during summer months (May-September). Superior believes this trend to be correlated to External Otitis Media (EOM), also referred to as otitis externa or swimmer’s ear, which is the inflammation of the external auditory canal or auricle.

This increase in otic antibiotic utilization has been identified as an opportunity for Superior contracted providers to improve Value Index Scores (i.e. quality scores) by:

- Educating members on how to prevent EOM.
- Informing members about Superior’s Over-The-Counter (OTC) swimmer’s ear drops Value Added Services (VAS) benefit.*
- Reducing the overutilization of otic antibiotics especially when it is a preventable condition.
- Prescribing an otic antibiotic when needed. Please note: there are several choices on the Texas Medicaid Preferred Drug List (PDL).

Prevention
Providers should ensure members are properly educated on ways to reduce the risk of EOM, which include:

- Using ear plugs or a shower cap when swimming/showering.
- Drying ears thoroughly after swimming or showering.
- Use a swimmer’s ear drop to aid drying the ears.*
- Avoiding the use of cotton swabs when cleaning or drying ears.
- If prone to ear infections, apply petroleum jelly to cotton balls and insert into ears before getting into the shower or bath.

Treatment and Follow-Up
Topical agents are primarily used to treat inflammation and infection caused by EOM, as the disease is limited to the ear canal skin.

- Follow-up is recommended at one (1) to two (2) weeks for patients with moderate infection.
- Follow-up may be necessary sooner for patients with severe infection.

Topical antimicrobials or antibiotics such as acetic acid, aminoglycosides, polymyxin B and quinolones are the treatment of choice in uncomplicated cases. These agents come in preparations with or without topical corticosteroids; the addition of corticosteroids may help resolve symptoms more quickly. However, there is no compelling evidence that any one antimicrobial or antibiotic preparation is clinically superior to another.¹

Resources
- Providers may access the Texas Medicaid Preferred Drug List, by visiting the Superior Pharmacy web page, under Pharmacy Resources: https://www.SuperiorHealthPlan.com/providers/resources/pharmacy.html
- Please direct any questions to the Superior Pharmacy department at 1-800-218-7453, ext. 22080.