

# Appropriate Use Criteria: What You Need to Know

## What is Appropriate Use Criteria (AUC)?

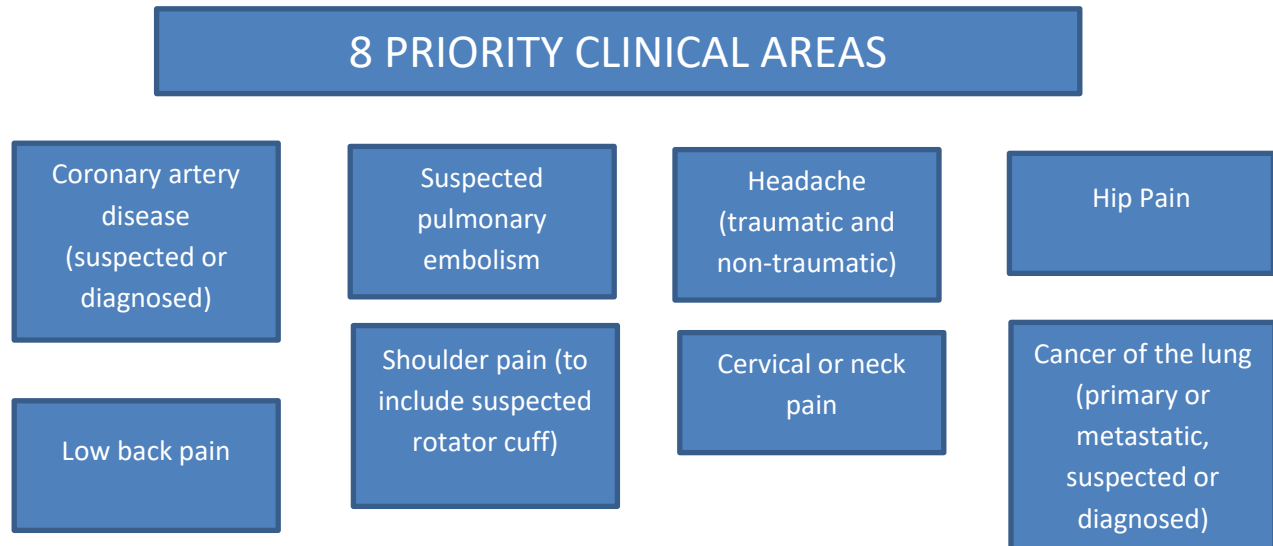
Appropriate Use Criteria or commonly referred to as AUC is a process used to verify when it is **appropriate** to perform a medical procedure or service. An "**appropriate**" procedure is one for which the expected health benefits exceed the expected health risks by a wide margin.

## Protecting Access to Medicare Act

The Protecting Access to Medicare Act (PAMA) established a new program to increase the rate of appropriate advanced diagnostic imaging services provided to Medicare beneficiaries. Examples of such advanced imaging services include:

- computed tomography (CT)
- positron emission tomography (PET)
- nuclear medicine, and
- magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)

## 8 PRIORITY CLINICAL AREAS



## How Will This Work?

As defined by this program, an ordering physician must access AUC through a Clinical Decision Support Mechanism (CDSM) which are electronic portals through which appropriate use criteria is accessed. The CDSM will pull information about the patient from the EHR and/or the ordering physician will enter the information and immediate feedback will be provided to determine whether the order adheres to AUC or if the AUC consulted was not applicable to the encounter.

Ultimately, practitioners whose ordering patterns are considered outliers will be subject to prior authorization. Information on outlier methodology and prior authorization is not yet available.

### **Who Is Impacted?**

This program impacts all physicians and practitioners whose claims are paid under the Medicare physician fee schedule, hospital outpatient prospective payment system or ambulatory surgical center payment system.

Also impacted are those that order advanced diagnostic imaging services and physicians, practitioners and facilities that furnish advanced diagnostic imaging services in a

- physician's office
- hospital outpatient department (including the emergency department),
- an ambulatory surgical center
- an independent diagnostic testing facility (IDTF)

### **Timeline and Implementation**

**2020 & 2021 ARE TESTING YEARS!**

CMS has announced that it is extending the education and operations testing period for the Imaging Appropriate Use Criteria Program through CY 2021.

There will be no payment consequences associated with the program during CY 2020 and CY 2021. CMS is encouraging stakeholders to use this time to prepare for the AUC program which could become mandatory in the future.