

## Welfare Fund – March 2011

### *Shingles Shot Update*

When first approved by the Food and Drug Administration, there was great interest and demand for the “shingles shot”, Zostavax vaccine. Shingles has been determined to be caused by the virus that also causes chickenpox, and those who had chickenpox as a child are most susceptible to, and likely to develop, shingles. Shingles can develop anywhere on the body, and can last for several months, causing great pain and discomfort, often resulting in periods of confinement to bed or hospitalization. Even after the initial rash disappears there can be many months of intense pain.

As with any medical procedure, there is cost for receiving the shingles shot, and not all insurance plans cover the shot. The cost of the vaccine is about \$ 200 plus the cost of administration. Generally, the vaccine is sold in batches of 10 doses, meaning that as interest in the vaccine has waned, providers must expend the funds to buy extra doses and store until needed. Complicating matters more is the fact that the vaccine must be kept frozen until it is administered. Not all providers ( or pharmacies ) have adequate refrigeration facilities to store excess doses until needed. This all contributes to greater difficulty in obtaining the vaccine now than when it first was on the market.

If you wish to obtain the shingles shot, please follow these guidelines:

- You must be 60 years of age or older.
- If you have GHI coverage, GHI will pay for the shingles shot if you are **at least 60** and **not yet 65**, as long as you use a GHI participating provider. Using a non-participating provider will likely result in the bulk of the cost being allocated to your annual out-of-network deductible. The GHI prescription drug benefit for those **not** Medicare eligible will **NOT** cover the cost of the vaccine, so it must be obtained through the doctor. The doctor must bill the procedure using CPT Code **90736**.
- If you are **65 or over** and in the GHI health plan, you must obtain the vaccine through your drug plan and take it to your doctor for administration. Since you will be paying a percentage of the drug cost as your co-payment, it is to your advantage to do this at the beginning of the year when your co-payment is only 25% of the cost of the drug.
- If you are in **any other health plan**, contact the plan to determine how, or if, they will pay for the vaccine. In very specific cases the welfare fund can help with some of the costs.

### *GHI Rider Reimbursement*

The reimbursement checks for those participating in the GHI Enhanced Medicare D drug plan were printed and mailed in mid-February. If you have not received a check and think you should receive one, or have any other questions concerning the reimbursement, please contact the fund at 718-624-2600.