

SPECIAL REPORT: Explore the inspiring stories of the Fierce 50

PAYERS

Cigna rolls out new digital dental screening tool to 16.5M members

By **Paige Minemyer** · Aug 17, 2023 07:00am

Cigna

Dental care

Mobile Apps

Digital health



While Cigna's new tool does not replace in-person visits, it provides patients with another avenue to pursue care. ((Cigna))

Cigna has launched a new tool that will allow its members to use their smartphones to check for dental health issues including gum disease and cavities.

The insurer announced Thursday morning that the online service, which is backed by Dental.com, will be available for free. It offers guided steps for members to take five photos of their teeth and mouth, which will be analyzed by the SmartScan technology. A Cigna network dentist will then review the scans.

The tool will provide members with an oral health score as well as personalized dental care tips. It will also identify any concerns and connect the user with either virtual or in-person follow-ups for treatment.

The program is available starting today to more than 16.5 million Cigna members in employer-sponsored or Affordable Care Act exchange plans, the insurer said.

“Many people fear the dentist or the costs that follow a dental visit, which causes them to delay care, making them susceptible to tooth decay and gum disease,” said Cary Sun, chief dental officer at Cigna Healthcare, in a release.

“Together with SmartScan, we are providing a quick and convenient way for people to access an oral health screening from home.”

Members can also use the SmartScan tech for “quick check-ins” between visits to the dentist’s office, Cigna said. For example, if they experience acute tooth pain, they could triage the symptom through the tool.



(Cigna)

Cigna noted in the release that data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that 36% of adults have not had a dental screening or cleaning within the past year, and, while the new tool does not replace in-person visits, it provides patients with another avenue to pursue care.

"While this is not a replacement for regular, in-person dental care, this tool empowers people to stay aware of their oral health and provides peace of mind when dental concerns arise," Sun said.

The tool joins Cigna's Dental Health Connect program, which offers a suite of dental offerings employers can use to improve the dental health of their workers. In addition to the SmartScan option, members can access on-demand dental care, including emergency services, from Teledentix.

Telehealth

Payers

Health Tech for Payers

ATTEND EVENTS

05-06

OCT

Medical Affairs Strategic Summit West

San Diego, CA

16-18

OCT

Fierce Biotech Summit

Boston, MA

02-03

NOV

Fierce Health Payer Summit

Austin, TX

PAYERS

Independence Blue Cross touts enhanced Medicare Advantage offerings for 2024

By Frank Diamond · Oct 3, 2023 07:35am

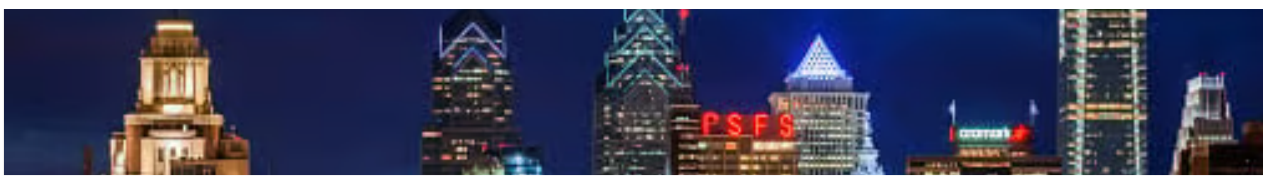
Independence Blue Cross

National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA)

Medicare Advantage

Healthcare Disparities





Kortney Cruz, Independence Blue Cross' senior vice president of government markets, said that the company has been "in the Philadelphia area market for 85 years and [is] just as invested in it today as we were on day one." (Getty Images)

Independence Blue Cross unveiled Medicare Advantage (MA) packages that the company said will greatly enhance benefits for its MA members, including a bigger allowance for vision, dental, hearing and over-the-counter items.

The insurer comprises a [network of providers \(https://ibxmedicare.com/pdfs/members/guides_and_forms/medicare-advantage-enrollment-numbers.pdf#page=5\)](https://ibxmedicare.com/pdfs/members/guides_and_forms/medicare-advantage-enrollment-numbers.pdf#page=5) (PDF) numbering over 50,000, outstripping competing health plans in the Philadelphia region, which includes the city and the surrounding suburbs of Bucks, Montgomery, Chester and Delaware counties.

The MA enhancements touted by IBX include reducing premiums for its Personal Choice 65 PPO, while including a Part B giveback and a bigger allowance for vision, dental, hearing and over-the-counter items. The aim of the Part B giveback is to reduce the amount members pay each month for their Medicare Part B premium and will be available in Personal Choice 65 PPO and the Keystone 65 Liberty HMO plans.

The dental coverage will include a zero copayment for routine exams and cleanings. "Additionally, some plans include a dental allowance for dentures, fillings, crowns, and much more," IBX said in a [press release \(https://news.ibx.com/aep-offerings/\)](https://news.ibx.com/aep-offerings/).

In some plans, routine vision and hearing exams will come with zero copayment and will in addition include an allowance for glasses and fittings and evaluations for hearing aids every year. IBX will also offer some plans zero monthly premiums and zero copayments for members visiting their primary care physicians.

Kortney Cruz, senior vice president of government markets at IBX, noted in the release that the company has been "in the Philadelphia area market for 85 years and are just as invested in it today as we were on day one. Those who have Medicare Advantage plans with us are more than members, they're part of the Independence family. As such, we make sure they have the tools they need to live a healthy life."

IBX offers to help members re-sign or new members sign up for the first time during the annual MA enrollment period between Oct. 15 and Dec. 7. In addition to the Personal Choice 65 PPO, members will also have the choice of signing up for the "tried-and-true Keystone 65 HMO plans," according to the press release.

IBX, which serves more than 108,000 MA members, intends to address the social determinants of health by working with community organizations to provide transportation and access to food. Its MA plans will include fitness membership to all YMCAs in the coverage area at no cost and up to \$125 per quarter for over-the-counter items.

Such efforts earned IBX the National Committee for Quality Assurance's (NCQA's) Health Equity Accreditation award, recognition that only 5% of the approximately 900 NCQA-accredited plans have received. Gregory E. Deavens, IBX's president and CEO, said in a [press release \(https://news.ibx.com/ncqa-health-equity-accreditation/\)](https://news.ibx.com/ncqa-health-equity-accreditation/) last week that "NCQA's recognition is a true testament to our commitment to address the root causes of health inequity and create healthier outcomes for every person in every community we serve."

IBX said the NCQA recognition underscores its efforts to remove race as a factor in clinical decision tools along with long-held medical beliefs that actually lead to poorer outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities. It also honors efforts to eliminate racial disparities in maternal morbidity, diabetes control and depression screening. IBX added that it supports organizations and individuals in southeastern Pennsylvania who strive to improve access to care and education opportunities for racial and ethnic minorities.

Finance

Regulatory

Payers

Social Determinants of Health