

**BULLETIN NUMBER:** 01-2022  
**TITLE:** CANCER EXTENDED COVERAGE  
**DATE:** JANUARY 27, 2022  
**EFFECTIVE DATE:** APRIL 1, 2022

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this bulletin is to explain changes to the maximum annual coverage and eligibility dates for cancer related diseases. The NHI introduces its policy on extended coverage for cancer diagnosed referral cases. Effective April 1, 2022 the annual coverage of \$35,000 will increase to \$70,000 for a period of two years specifically for cancer diagnosed referral cases. This means that members under NHI approved for off-island referral diagnosed with cancer is eligible to receive a maximum of \$70,000 for a period of two years. All other benefits under NHI and eligibility requirements shall remain the same.

**BACKGROUND:**

Cancer is the most common disease-affecting people of all ages in the Republic of Palau. Cancer is a broad terms and scientifically explained as a result of cellular changes causing uncontrolled growth and division of cells. There are many various types of cancer and usually name for the organs or tissues where the cancer cell form. Staging is an important process to anyone diagnosed with a type of cancer. According to American Cancer Society, doctors use staging information to help plan treatment to predict a person's outlook or prognosis. NHI records reveal increase of coverage of advance staged cancers. This means that cases are detected at the later stage of this disease when palliative treatment is commonly recommended. With the increase use of new technology, healthcare cost is not getting cheaper or affordable for most people living in Palau. The annual maximum coverage of \$35,000 for cancer cases is barely enough to cover the cost of treatment, especially cancer approaching the advanced stages. There is also a big financial impact for anyone diagnosed with cancer and exceeds the annual maximum coverage limit. In most cases, cost of keeping up with monthly-prescribed medication and the excess cost after insurance coverage can discourage someone from seeking further treatment. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Healthcare Fund program to ensure affordability and accessibility of care to any members affected by this disease.

**BENEFIT POLICY:**

**Maximum Benefit Dollar Limit:** 70,000  
**Benefit Year:** Every Oct 1 and End September 30  
**Period:** Two Year Period

The NHI approves extended coverage on Cancer related cases up to two years. A member is eligible for coverage amount up to \$70,000 within coverage period of 2 years. Medical treatment cost that exceeds \$35,000 in one benefit year shall require the review of the Utilization Reviewer and approval of the Plan Administrator. Any amount exceeding the \$70,000 within the two year period shall be the responsibility of the member.

## **INTERPRETATION:**

### **OFF-ISLAND REFERRALS:**

### **PROVIDERS: NHI OFF-ISLAND PROVIDERS IN MANILA AND TAIWAN**

#### **Covered Services:**

- Airfare Benefit is covered per member per coverage period (2 yrs.)
- Diagnostic Equipment – MRI, CT Scan etc.
- Hospital Room and board (regular room at standard stay of 15 days)
- Surgery, anesthesia, and pain management;
- X-ray, Radiation therapy, Chemo therapy and other therapy procedures used in the treatment of Cancer;
- Blood and Blood Plasma for transfusions;
- Prescription Drugs and medicines as medically necessary during hospital confinement;
- Ground ambulance transport to and from hospital;
- Outpatient target therapy drugs and or/specialty medication limited up to three (3) months and pre-approved by Plan Administrator.

#### **Approval Process:**

1. Case is approved by the Medical Referral Committee per referral guidelines;
2. Approved Certificate of Approval (COA) based on estimated cost of treatment;
3. Approved COA specifically for treatment plan for cancer diagnosis;
4. Any amount exceeding \$35,000 shall be lifted and increased to **\$70,000** upon review of HCF Utilization Reviewer for medical necessity:
  - a. UR to review biopsy results, latest imaging test and lab works, communicate with off-island physician/ doctor on cancer staging and life expectancy.
  - b. UR may recommend denying or approving continuation of coverage based on information and imaging test as provided by the patient's off-island physician.
  - c. UR may deny approval of case that is proven by doctors to be terminal or end stage cancer.
5. Submitted to Plan Administrator for action and approval of the threshold increase.

**Coverage Period:**

Benefit period starts every October 1st of each year and ends two years on September 30<sup>th</sup>

	Start	End	Max Coverage	Notes
Benefit Year 1	1-Oct	30-Sep	\$ 70,000	Approved Cancer cases may use up to max coverage in a period of 2 years
Benefit Year 2	1-Oct	30-Sep		

<b>Examples</b>
If a case exceeds \$35,000 before Benefit Year 2, case is eligible for another \$35,000 effective immediately extending to Benefit Year 2 end of coverage
If a case does not exceed \$35,000 before Benefit Year 2, case will follow annual benefit year coverage of \$35,000 per year

**LOCAL COVERAGE:**

Max Coverage: None

Provider: Belau National Hospital (BNH)

Service: Room & board, medical services and supplies, medical equipment and drugs

- The cost of inpatient services reimbursed to BNH as determined by applying the most recent Reimbursement Scheduled as established between the Ministry of Health and Human Services and the Healthcare Fund.

*(Inpatient coverage subject to current MOU between the Ministry of Health and the Healthcare Fund.)*