



January 25, 2021

Gail K. Boudreaux
President & CEO
Anthem, Inc.
220 Virginia Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Via Email: boardofdirectors@anthem.com

Dear Ms. Boudreaux:

Heart Valve Voice US is a patient advocacy organization focused on improving the diagnosis, management and treatment of heart valve disease. We understand Anthem is in the process of reconsidering its current misguided policy of not covering innovative transcatheter valve procedures, such as TAVR for low-risk patients and TEER/TMVR.

To the best of our knowledge, **all** other major private insurers, as well as Medicare, cover these procedures, per the preponderance of research that supports the treatments, as well as the most recent guidelines from the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association.

Anthem's lack of coverage for these innovative transcatheter therapies is especially perplexing in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. By directing patients to open heart surgery, Anthem is exposing them to, typically, three or four days of hospitalization, more time in ICU, and significantly longer recovery times. By contrast, procedures like TAVR, in addition to being less invasive, generally require only an overnight hospital stay and we are seeing many procedures being done on an *outpatient* basis to minimize patient exposure and risk during this pandemic.

We know you are aware of these trends, research and the guidelines and will leave it to our colleagues from the medical societies and manufacturers to highlight the relevant findings.

As patient advocates, our primary concern is that patients have access to the treatment that is most appropriate for them, based on shared decision making between the patient and their heart team. Consideration should be given to the lifetime risks and benefits of a transcatheter versus surgical approach. The patient's individual values and preferences must be considered, as well as the presence of any associated conditions or comorbidities (we prefer the term co-existing conditions).



The decision should also include a discussion of whether a mechanical or bioprosthetic valve is preferred, and whether the patient would be comfortable with ongoing anticoagulant therapy, as may be needed.

In considering a transcatheter versus a surgical procedure, patients will also consider factors such as: time in hospital; recovery time; activity level; employment situation; family considerations; availability of a care partner; willingness to potentially undergo a subsequent procedure; lifestyle; and life expectancy.

The bottom line is, this is a medical decision and personal decision; not a decision that should be based on the insurance coverage that is available. Patient preference, coupled with sound medical guidance, should drive this decision.

We note that Anthem's vision is, "To be the most innovative, valuable and inclusive partner." The company also maintains, "Our health plan companies deliver quality products and services that give their members *access to the care they need* (emphasis added)." We anticipate a new coverage policy that lives up to this vision, brings Anthem in line with standard industry practices, acknowledges current research, and recognizes the latest medical guidelines. Most importantly, we expect Anthem to do the only right thing and act in the best interest of its 42 million customers across 13 states. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Lewis
Executive Director