Issue Brief

Issue: Scope of Practice – Genetic Counselors

CAP Position:
The College of American Pathologists (CAP) believes that genetic counselors can perform a vital role in counseling clients on the advisability or results of genetic tests, provided such counseling does not involve a medical diagnosis. Moreover, state licensure efforts for genetic counselors should not grant genetic counselors any authority to practice medicine, and should not limit the scope of practice of physicians to counsel patients on genetic test results, or to use any title related to such counseling without the need for any additional qualification.

Status:
The CAP, partnering with state pathology and medical societies, has been successful in advocating a scope of practice for genetic counselors that excludes “interpretation” of genetic test results. From 2010 to 2012, the CAP worked to amend or defeat several bills that do not conform to this policy, resulting in amended genetic counselor licensure bills in Illinois, Delaware and Pennsylvania.

Background:
For several years, genetic counselors have sought recognition of their profession through state licensure. The CAP did not oppose these state licensure bills. However, in 2009, New Jersey passed a licensure law for genetic counselors that included a scope of practice to interpret genetic tests. The CAP opposes such laws since genetic counselors do not have the education or clinical training to practice medicine.

In 2011, the CAP and the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) reached a scope of practice agreement that does not include the “interpretation” of test results. This agreement has helped ensure that state licensure laws do not grant genetic counselors the statutory authority to interpret genetic tests or practice medicine.

For More Information:
Contact your state pathology president to discuss the status of direct billing legislation in your state or contact Mike Troubh at mtroubh@cap.org. See more info at www.cap.org