

HUMANA | \$2.8 million will be split by more than 2,200 doctors based on billings

# INSURER AGREES TO SETTLE

**The 2005 class-action lawsuit alleged that several insurers engaged in monopolistic behavior.**

By JULIUS A. KARASH  
The Kansas City Star

**H**umana Inc. has settled its part of a case in which area doctors sued Humana and other insurers, alleging a conspiracy to suppress payments to physicians.

The class action suit filed in 2005 alleged that the health insurers violated antitrust laws by fixing prices and engaging in other monopolistic

behavior, such as refusing to negotiate reasonable reimbursements.

More than 2,200 doctors are eligible to participate in the settlement, which calls for Humana to pay the doctors \$2.8 million in cash. The doctors will split the money based on billings to Humana over a three-year period, said Diane Breneman, an attorney representing the doctors.

Breneman said Humana also agreed to process and pay physician bills in an accurate and timely manner.

"The plaintiffs are pleased at Humana's recognition of the need for change in the Kansas City physician reimbursement market," she said.

Humana admitted no wrongdoing as a part of the settlement.

"There was no admission to guilt," Humana spokesman Jeff Blunt said. "Humana never has and never will collude with competitors."

He said the company does not anticipate any impact on premiums as a result of the settlement.

Blunt said Humana on average pays claims in two weeks if the claims are filed properly. He said the company is making technological improvements to speed up the process.

The major remaining defendants in the litigation are **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City, UnitedHealth-**

**care and Coventry Health Care of Kansas Inc.**

In 2006, a Jackson County judge ruled against arbitration to resolve the lawsuit. Most of the insurers in the case wanted arbitration, which also was recommended by a special master in the case. But the doctor groups that brought the case opposed arbitration, and Circuit Judge Charles E. Atwell supported their position.

The defendants have appealed Atwell's decision to the **Missouri Court of Appeals**, where the case is pending.

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