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Group Sues Five HMOs for Cancer Therapy

Blue Shield of California, Kaiser Health Plan Inc., Cigna Corp., PacifiCare Health Systems Inc., and Health Net Inc. are the five HMOs named in a suit which seeks class action status.

Claremont attorney Michael Bidart alleges that the five HMOs named in the suit have attempted to shift the burden of the plan member's health care from the HMO back to the plan member. According to the complaint the HMOs allegedly told patients that proton beam therapy, a procedure that shoots radiation at the tumor to treat prostate cancer, is an experimental treatment and not covered under the terms of their policies.

Blue Cross and Aetna Inc. are among the health care organizations that provide the proton beam treatment.

It is estimated by the American Cancer Society that about 180,000 US men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year and approximately 37,000 will die from the disease.