

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

Make Sure the Patient Qualifies For Rehab Services

Not every Medicare beneficiary can receive low-vision services - here's how to find out who can

Medicare will pay for rehabilitation services provided by a physician, a qualified occupational therapist, or a qualified physical therapist. But beware: CMS has strict rules about who qualifies for rehab.

"The patient must have a potential of restoration or improvement of lost functions, and must be expected to improve significantly within a reasonable and generally predictable amount of time," says Medicare's policy for coverage of vision-impairment rehabilitation services.

Do this: Check your Medicare carrier for LMRPs or LCDs concerning low-vision therapy. Many carriers have policies similar to that of National Heritage Insurance Company of California, which limits low-vision rehabilitation to patients exhibiting one of the following:

1. A best corrected visual acuity of less than 20/60 in the better or only seeing eye
2. Constriction of visual fields or peripheral visual field defect
3. A scotoma or central visual field defect
4. A homonymous or heteronymous bilateral visual field defect.