

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Preventive Care: CMS Further Expands Preventive Care to Cover Depression and Alcohol Misuse Screenings

If alcohol misuse is found, CMS will cover four additional counseling visits.

The news that Medicare patients will soon benefit from cardiovascular screenings wasn't the only positive note that CMS sang in the past few weeks. The agency also announced that it will soon cover annual screenings for two additional preventive services.

Alcohol misuse screening: Primary care providers will be able to perform an annual alcohol misuse screening at no cost to the patient. If the screening turns up positive for alcohol misuse, Medicare will cover four behavioral counseling sessions each year to treat the alcohol issues, according to an Oct. 14 CMS statement.

The alcohol misuse screening will require physicians to use the "Five A's" criteria outlined in our article "CMS to Cover Annual Visit to Prevent Cardiovascular Disease" **on page xxx**. To read CMS's coverage criteria for alcohol misuse, visit www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/details/nca-decision-memo.aspx?NCAId=249.

Depression screening: CMS estimates that one in six people age 65 and older suffers from depression. To that end, Medicare now covers annual screening for depression by primary care practices.

"These new coverage policies address important issues related to mental health and prevention of substance abuse," said CMS's **Patrick Conway, MD**, in an Oct. 14 statement.

To determine which screening tools CMS recommends for the depression prevention visits, read the complete Decision Memorandum at www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/details/nca-decision-memo.aspx?NCAId=251.