

Eli's Rehab Report

Medical Review: Help Home Health Partners Avoid Probe Edits

Improved communication with nursing staff is the key.

The Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs), particularly **Palmetto GBA**, have set their sights on home health claims for furnishing 20 or more therapy visits.

"Palmetto is looking at patients with lower clinical scores who have 20 or more therapy visits," says **Lisa Selman-Holman**, AHIMA-Approved ICD-10-CM Trainer/Ambassador of Selman-Holman & Associates, **CoDR** **Coding Done Right** and **Code Pro University** in Denton, Texas. "Agencies with lower clinical scores and 20 therapy visits should take the time to review OASIS accuracy as well as coding accuracy." If your claims have HIPPS codes for high therapy and low clinical scores, "you may be chosen for these probe edits," she warns.

Know What You Can Do

Communication problems between nurses and therapists could be at the root of the problem claims, says **Julianne Haydel** of **Haydel Consulting Services** in Baton Rouge, La. When therapists and nurses don't communicate efficiently, it often results in conflicting documentation, she says.

When the therapist says the patient can walk with moderate assistance for 200 feet and the nurse says the patient has difficulty ambulating, the MAC is bound to go with the therapist's documentation, Haydel says. "Both parties need to talk to get a full picture. Is the patient safe to walk without any assistance? Are there any new medications that may increase the risk of falls regardless of the fact that the patient's strength is returning? What about environmental factors such as torn carpet?"

Try this: "Nurses should always take advantage of therapists when assessing a patient, if possible," Haydel says. "The therapist may not complete the OASIS questions but collaboration is acceptable, and I believe part of a more complete assessment."

For example: "A nurse may not see a problem with the patient's ambulation but the therapist may note that one foot doesn't clear the ground or [that] the patient's hips are not on an even plane," Haydel says. "These are not things that nurses look at on a regular basis. After the therapist does his assessment, the nurse can ask for his input." After verifying the therapist's findings, the clinician completing the OASIS can include this data.

"Palmetto is also interested in patients who have 20 therapy visits with lower functional scores," Selman-Holman says on her blog. "Obviously, if the patient requires that many therapy visits a lower functional score does not support that number of therapy visits."

Documentation tip: To support claims, including details such as the necessity of providing two or more types of therapy could help, Selman-Holman says.