

Eli's Rehab Report

NEWS BREIFIS: Good News--OTs Eligible for Bonus Under Quality Reporting Initiative

Bethesda, Md.--Occupational therapists up for some extra cash this year will be pleased to hear the latest news from the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

Thanks to some "major advocacy effort" on the association's part, occupational therapists are now included in the Medicare Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) program, said an AOTA press release.

Background: The Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006 established the PQRI program, which provides a bonus payment to Medicare Part B providers for reporting quality measures, starting in mid-2007.

For the 2007 PQRI, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is using 74 quality measures from the 2007 Physician Voluntary Reporting Program. AOTA analyzed the 74 quality measures and submitted a proposal for occupational therapists to participate in the "screening for future fall risk" measure.

Reasoning: This measure "clearly falls within the occupational therapy scope of practice"--especially because of occupational therapists' expertise in fall prevention, AOTA said.

On the horizon: CMS also anticipates a PQRI program in 2008, but it will likely use different or additional quality measures. For now, the bonus will be a 1.5 percent lumpsum payment, subject to a cap, of total allowed charges for covered Medicare physician fee schedule services.

The 2007 PQRI program will be in place from July 1 to Dec. 31 and will require participating therapists to include their National Provider Identifier (NPI). For more information, check out CMS' PQRI Web site at www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI/.