

Eli's Rehab Report

NEWS BRIEFS: Senate Bill Covers Therapy Hot Spots in Health Reform Package

Health care reform is covering topics that affect rehab providers directly. After significant negotiations to consolidate various health care reform bills, the Senate Democrats released a comprehensive reform package on Nov. 18 -- the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).

Of note: This bill contains a one-year extension to the therapy caps exceptions process and a one-year fix to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule's sustainable growth rate (SGR), providing a 0.5 percent Medicare pay increase in 2010, reported PT Bulletin Online. The bill also says the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Innovation Center must research direct access models for expanding physical therapy access for Medicare beneficiaries in rural areas.

As for the big picture, PPACA would cost \$848 billion and require most people to buy insurance, the Bulletin pointed out. People would be able to shop for policies in new state-based "exchanges." In addition, insurance companies would be subject to new rules such as, no denying coverage based on preexisting conditions. The House of Representatives has a separate health care reform bill, the Affordable Health Choices for America Act (HR 3962), which has already passed.