

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: Curative Care-Hospice Partnership Goes Untested

Medicare is falling behind on testing curative care for beneficiaries, report Politico and Kaiser Health News. The 2010 Affordable Care Act tells the **Department of Health and Human Services** to select up to 15 sites to test concurrent care for patients in Medicare for three years. But Medicare has yet to take any concrete steps toward beginning it.

"It is missing an opportunity," said Dr. **Randall Krakauer**, an **Aetna** executive who helped establish that insurer's concurrent care program for people with private coverage. "Our own experience is when you do liberalize the hospice benefit, it does not cost you extra and it may actually cost you less."

Krakauer said several years ago, Aetna asked Medicare for permission to expand the program to the 448,000 elderly enrolled in its private Medicare Advantage plans □ with Aetna promising to pay for any extra costs □ but never got a response. "We are very interested in participating in this," he said.

Aetna estimated it saved 22 percent on people under 65 who were part of its broad program with hospice and more curative care. But no one has been able to do a rigorous study of how it will play out for Medicare patients.