

Eli's Hospice Insider

Legislation: Bill Allowing PAs As Hospice Attendings Would Increase Access

Hospices may see more Medicare beneficiaries on their rolls if legislation to improve access to the benefit passes into law.

On May 5, Sens. **Chuck Grassley** (R-Iowa) and **Kent Conrad** (D-N.D.) introduced legislation (S. 891) that would allow physician assistants to serve as hospice patients' attending physicians. Currently, beneficiaries using a PA as their primary care provider must switch to a physician when they elect hospice care, Grassley and Conrad note in a release.

"The inability of PAs to provide hospice care for their terminally ill Medicare patients places an unconscionable burden on the patient to find alternative care and denies patients access to their 'medical home' at a time when they are the most vulnerable," says **American Academy of Physician Assistants** president **Patrick Killeen** in a statement.

"It makes sense to allow patients to continue to see the same health care provider through hospice care," Grassley says in the release. "Patients benefit when they continue to see the health care professionals who know them. This provision is especially important for rural areas, where physician assistants provide a lot of direct care, and where access to providers is always a challenge."

"Physician assistants are a crucial part of the health care system in North Dakota and other rural areas," Conrad says. "They provide quality health care to our seniors and should be allowed to continue when the patient transitions to hospice care."

The **National Association for Home Care & Hospice** "applauds the senators for offering this important legislation," NAHC says in its member newsletter. Both Grassley and Conrad serve on the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over Medicare issues.