

MDS Alert

MDS TRENDS: Got Questions About MDS 3.0?

Here are some important answers.

If you suffer from information "underload" about the upcoming revamped MDS, you're not alone. Below, experts shed some light on what's on the horizon.

Where is the MDS 3.0 now? Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' contractor **Rand Corporation** is currently conducting a national evaluation of the performance of the draft MDS 3.0 in eight states and four VA regions across the country. CMS has also posted the draft 3.0 version on its Web site.

At the conclusion of the national test, "Rand will receive feedback from all the nurses who used the tool," reports **Debra Saliba, MD, MPH**, a research scientist with Rand Health, which is conducting the 3.0 field testing. "Rand and **Harvard University** will also analyze the reliability or agreement among the nurses who collected the MDS information and examine the validity of significantly revised MDS sections," she adds. "We will do a crosswalk between the current 2.0 version and the draft 3.0 version to preserve functionality of the current payment cells and quality measures."

Rand's final report on the field testing is due to CMS in December 2007, reports Saliba. CMS will then review Rand's recommendations and make a "final decision on roll-out dates and requirements," she says.

Will MDS 3.0 really go into effect? Some people in long-term care predict the process of switching to a totally new MDS is so complex that CMS could put it on the back burner indefinitely and come up with a revised MDS 2.0 instead. But regulatory analyst **Peter Arbuthnot** doesn't think CMS has any choice but to move ahead with 3.0 implementation. He points to CMS' need to introduce more quality measures to deal with pay for performance and other emerging issues, including ICD-10, the move to electronic medical records -- and the revised RUG system, which will better reflect ancillary costs.

Editor's note: For more information on CMS' progress on RUG refinements and a new CMS-sponsored study supporting use of electronic medical records to capture resident data at point of care, see MDS News in this issue.