

MDS Alert

RAI COMPLIANCE: Know The Consequences Of Understaging Pressure Ulcers

Here are the F tag and RUG realities.

What you code on the MDS is what you get in the QM/QI and payment realms, which is certainly true for staging pressure ulcers in Section M.

For instance, you could trigger the postacute pressure ulcer QM/QI if you don't stage a pressure ulcer accurately on the 5-day and 14-day MDSs, says **Jane Belt, RN, MSN**, a consultant with **Plante & Moran Clinical Group** in Columbus, OH. And that will get surveyors potentially digging deeper to see if your facility has systemic shortfalls in assessing and coding pressure ulcers. If you understage what's really a stage 3 pressure ulcer, a resident may end up in a lower-paying RUG, which means the facility will have less money for wound care. While a single stage 2 pressure ulcer with two or more treatments won't RUG a resident into Special Care, one stage 3 or 4 ulcer with two treatments coded in Section M will. And many shallow stage 3 pressure ulcers are actually reported as stage 2, in the experience of **Mary Arnold Long, MSN, RN, CRRN, CWOCA, APRN-BC, CLNC**, a wound care specialist in Mason, OH. (For tips on how to differentiate between a stage 2 and stage 3 pressure ulcer, see the SPECIAL FOCUS article in this issue.)