

## OASIS Alert

### Assessment: Put Depression On Your Radar Screen

#### New form forces clinicians to gauge mental health, too.

While the new OASIS-C will increase the number of physical items you assess, it doesn't stop there.

The new tool will contain three new depression items (M1730, M1734, and M1736) meant to catch the early signs of depression in home health patients, which is "typically underassessed," explained regulatory consultant **Rebecca Friedman Zuber** in the **Eli**-sponsored audioconference, "OASIS-C: What You Need to Know Now About this Major Assessment Overhaul."

Your duty: The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** will require that you use a standard screening tool for depression, as well as develop an intervention plan -- including an assessment scale -- that keeps patients from sinking into depression during your care.

#### Ask Mental Health Experts For Advice

CMS doesn't specify what tool agencies should use to screen for depression -- but your patients' primary care physicians aren't your best go-to resource, Friedman Zuber asserted.

Better: Your local mental health center or psychiatric facility can help you distinguish between the most commonly available depression screening tools. Using mental health professionals' advice, you can select the best tool for your patients, she assures **Eli**.

#### Team Up Before You Try To Intervene

As with any intervention, your agency must consult with and obtain a physician's order before implementing your depression intervention plan. You can prepare for potential problems by educating everyone about depression.

Get started: Ask mental health professionals to coach your clinicians on how to identify the signs and symptoms of depression, Zuber Friedman recommends. Then, encourage clinicians to educate their patients about what they've learned.

Next step: Urge your clinicians to keep a close eye on patients' mental health by using your chosen depression scale. Determine which place on the scale will raise your agency's depression red flags -- and which will kick off your intervention plan.