

## OASIS Alert

### Home Health Compare: Find Out How You Stack Up In The First Public Comparison Update

But it's up to you to track progress over time.

Frustrated with your initial results on Home Health Compare? Wondering if your quality improvement project made a difference? Check out the new data on Home Health Compare.

As of March 4, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** updated the patient outcomes data available to consumers and referral sources at CMS' Web site -- [www.homehealthcompare.gov](http://www.homehealthcompare.gov).

The national averages improved in eight of the measures and stayed the same in the other three. That means even if your numbers improved, you could stay the same -- or drop -- in comparison to agencies nationwide, one expert notes.

**Snag:** The old national averages disappear when the new ones are added [but see "Home Health Agencies Raise The Bar"], making it important to keep your own records if you want to be able to compare your outcome data over time. CMS is considering showing previous information on the site, but doesn't do so currently, a CMS spokesperson tells **Eli**.

The new numbers reflect the period from December 2002 through November 2003, CMS reports. The agency plans to update the quality measure data quarterly -- in February, May, August and November -- based on the most recent data available, explains the **Texas Medical Foundation**, a quality improvement organization.

Updates will occur on the second full weekend of the designated month. Several weeks later updates will appear on Home Health Compare, CMS says.

**Red flag:** The conversion calculator on the CMS Web site has not been updated even though the outcome numbers have, so it won't be accurate when used with the new numbers, TMF warns. Agencies like to be able to convert the numbers because in outcome-based quality improvement reports, the national reference against which an agency compares its numbers is risk-adjusted to take into account an agency's patient case mix. In the home health quality improvement project, the opposite is true -- the agency's own numbers are risk-adjusted while the national and state numbers are not, a CMS spokesperson explained in the October satellite broadcast.