

OASIS Alert

Industry News

Who will you be completing OASIS assessments for in coming years? You can look to a new study by the U.S. Census Bureau for clues.

In 1980, there were 720,000 people aged 90 and older in the United States. In 2010, there were 1.9 million people aged 90 and older; by 2050, the ranks of people 90 and older may reach 9 million, the Census Bureau says in a new report commissioned by the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health.

A majority of the 90-plus population are widowed white women who live alone or in a nursing home, according to the report. Almost all of them have health insurance coverage through Medicare and/or Medicaid and the vast majority say they have one or more types of disability.

"Because of increasing numbers of older people and increases in life expectancy at older ages, the oldest segments of the older population are growing the fastest," the NIA's Richard Suzman says in a release. The report is at www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acs-17.pdf.

You'll be filling out more OASIS assessments than ever if suggestions from a new study help sway policy and lawmakers toward boosting home care. Findings from a study conducted by researchers at the **University of Texas Medical Branch** in Galveston suggest that programs aimed at helping older patients recuperate successfully at home instead of in an institutional setting could greatly improve their health outcomes and reduce health care costs.

Direct discharge from the hospital to a skilled nursing facility puts patients at "extremely high risk" of needing long-term nursing home care, rather than returning home, says the study published in the Oct. 3 Journals of Gerontology Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences.

"If Medicare payment guidelines were broadened to cover in-home care -- bathing and food preparation for example -- there is a tremendous potential for savings and patients could adjust gradually back to their familiar home environment," study author **James Goodwin**, director of the **Sealy Center on Aging** at UTMB, says in a release. "Medicare will not pay for the in-home care."

Goodwin recommends that hospitals consider alternatives to skilled nursing facilities post-hospitalization, such as home care. "Most people fervently wish to remain at home and it is our responsibility to help avoid preventable nursing home admissions," he says.

Resource: For a link to the study's free abstract, e-mail the editor, Jan Milliman, at janm@codinginstitute.com with "Discharge Study" in the subject line.