

OASIS Alert

Industry Note: Falls May Indicate Early Alzheimer's

Your patients who you assess as at risk for falls may be in the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease.

A study presented at the Alzheimer's Association's annual International Conference in Paris found that subjects whose brain scans showed signs of amyloid had a two times greater risk of falls than those participants without signs of amyloid. Amyloid is an early indicator of Alzheimer's disease. The study looked at the rate of falls for 125 older adult participants. Many of the subjects were cognitively healthy and had no apparent memory deficits, but their brain scans revealed amyloid. Over the course of the eight-month study, 48 participants experienced at least one fall.

CMS may not have been able to answer many questions at the July Open Door Forum, but it has provided some follow-up guidance after the fact. However, it may not be good news for HHAs.

CMS issued a question-and-answer set to the **National Association for Home Care & Hospice** regarding some therapy reassessment and face-to-face questions asked in the forum. In one of the Q&As, CMS makes clear that therapy services will still be considered non-covered even if the reason for the agency failing to make a 30-day reassessment visit is out of its control.

For example, if a patient is in the hospital, refuses a visit, has an unplanned physician visit, etc., agencies still must make the 30-day reassessment deadline, CMS maintains. "An assessment visit by a qualified therapist (per discipline) is required at least every 30 days," CMS says in the Q&As. "As such, therapy visits provided in absence of that requirement being met would not be considered covered therapy services under the Medicare home health benefit."

Medicare beneficiaries now have an easier way to find you -- and check up on your quality standings. CMS has launched its "Quality Care Finder" website at www.medicare.gov/quality-care-finder. The site gives beneficiaries links to search all of CMS's "Compare" websites that list providers' quality data, including Home Health Compare. It also gives beneficiaries links to basic Medicare benefit information.

Note: CMS has updated the Hospital Compare site to include 30-day readmission rates for heart attack, heart failure, and pneumonia, which may give hospitals an incentive to help line up home care for discharged patients with such conditions.

CMS is also tweaking its Quality Improvement Organization program, it says in a release.