

OASIS Alert

Industry Notes:

Take Advantage of New OASIS Training Resource

CMS has posted a new OASIS web based training module for the Patient Tracking domain. To access the module go to: <http://surveyortraining.cms.hhs.gov/> select "I AM A PROVIDER" option, select "Web based training" scroll down to 6th item and select OASIS Training, select "Launch the Course," select desired module. CMS is interested in provider feedback on the OASIS training modules and requests that viewers send feedback to: oasistrainingfeedback@cms.hhs.gov

- **If you're seeking educational materials** to introduce the concept of palliative care to your patients, you may want to turn to a new resource from **The Joint Commission**. The accrediting body formerly known as JCAHO has introduced a brochure on the topic as part of its "Speak Up" campaign to educate patients on health care topics.

The brochure, which is available in English and Spanish online at www.jointcommission.org/speak_up_palliative/, covers issues ranging from where to access palliative care to how to secure payment for it.

- **Smoking is not simply injurious to health --** it can impair your memory, the researchers of the **Collaboration for Drug and Alcohol Research Group at Northumbria University** found, Northumbria University announced in a September 11 press release. The study was published recently in the online journal *Addiction*.

The **World Health Organization** had reported that there could be grave health consequences for even non-smokers who were exposed to smoke for a period. Earlier it was recognized that loss of memory, even dementia, could occur. Now, researchers are discovering "that the deficits associated with secondhand smoke exposure extend to everyday cognitive function," said **Dr. Tom Heffernan**, a researcher of the research group in the release.

Secondhand smoking is when an individual is exposed to the smoke exhaled by another in the home or in 'smoking areas' on a regular basis. The study compared one set of smokers and two sets of non-smokers of which one group was exposed to smoke at least 25 hours in a week for a period of four and a half years; while the other group did not face any such exposure.

Rider: While the study did establish links between smoking, even secondhand smoking, and deteriorating memory function, no causal relationship could be established.

In another finding, researchers at **Washington University School of Medicine** in St. Louis found that even though lung cancer can occur in non-smokers, the smokers were affected more. "The mutation frequency was ten-fold higher in smokers compared to never-smokers," researcher **Ramaswamy Govindan** was quoted as saying in the journal *Cell*.

- **If you thought you were gaining coverage of an extra visit** when a therapist misses a reassessment deadline, think again.

Old way: When a qualified therapist misses one of the required reassessment visits, once the therapist has completed the required reassessment, coverage resumes after this reassessment visit, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** explained in its 2013 home health prospective payment system proposed rule this summer.

New way: Starting Jan. 1., when a therapist misses a reassessment, "therapy coverage would resume with the visit during which the qualified therapist completed the late reassessment, not the visit after the therapist completed the late reassessment," CMS confirms in the final rule published in the Nov. 8 Federal Register.

Many home health agencies cheered this change, reading it to mean an extra visit's coverage -- the visit during which the therapist's reassessment takes place.

Not so fast, CMS's **Hillary Loeffler** said in the forum. Currently, the visit prior to the make-up reassessment visit is counted, while the visit during which the reassessment occurs is not, Loeffler explained in response to a question from therapy expert **Cindy Krafft**. Starting Jan. 1, the opposite will occur -- Medicare will not cover the visit prior to the reassessment, but will cover the reassessment visit.

"I think that's a piece that a lot of people have missed," Krafft told CMS in the forum. They "didn't see that little piece about a different visit ... ending up non-covered."

Forthcoming questions-and-answers and manual provisions on the topic will aim to help clarify any misconceptions, Loeffler said.

Trouble ahead: "I am very concerned the vast majority of agencies don't know about this," Krafft tells **Eli**. "I have to question if the vendors even do." Krafft expects frequent errors based on this confusion in 2013. "Even one visit can impact payment levels," worries Krafft, with **Fazzi Associates** and president of the **American Physical Therapy Association's** Home Health Section.

Date clarification: The therapy provisions in the final rule are effective for episodes beginning on or after Jan. 1, Loeffler explained in the forum. That effective date was not included in the final rule, although CMS did post it on its website, she said.

In response to a provider question, CMS's **Randy Thronset** also confirmed that CMS still allows a reassessment visit range (11-13 or 17-19) for patients in rural areas.

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