

## OASIS Alert

### Industry Notes: Don't waste your time with an extra face-to-face visit when you don't have to.

That's the takeaway from a recent question-and-answer issued by Medicare Administrative Contractor **NHIC**. "If a home health patient is admitted twice within the same 90-day period for the same reason, can the first face-to-face encounter documentation be used for both admissions?" asked a home health agency in NHIC's Aug. 3 Ask the Contractor Teleconference.

"In this instance, the same face-to-face encounter could be utilized for both home health admissions," NHIC replies in the ACT summary.

But home health agencies may not like another of NHIC's answers to a F2F question quite as much. "If a home health patient was scheduled to have the face-to-face encounter on day 10, but transferred to hospice on day eight, and is now refusing to go to the doctor for the home health face-to-face encounter, would this be considered an exceptional circumstance?" a provider asked in the conference.

"The face-to-face encounter is a requirement for payment," NHIC says. "The home health services could not be billed if it does not occur."

NHIC also reminds providers that they must have the signed F2F documentation in hand before billing Medicare for an episode. "You cannot bill Medicare until you have the signed documentation," NHIC explains. "The face-to-face encounter is part of the re-certification."

Resource: The four-page ACT summary is online at [www.medicarenhic.com/RHHI/billing/J14%20HHH%20ACT8311QAs.pdf](http://www.medicarenhic.com/RHHI/billing/J14%20HHH%20ACT8311QAs.pdf).

If you want to protect your workers and patients against infections, you may want to change where you're looking. A study published in a recent American Journal of Infection Control found that "cell phones used by patients and their visitors were twice as likely to contain potentially dangerous bacteria as those of healthcare workers," states a press release on the research. The study focused on hospital patients, but the results can give home care providers food for thought on teaching patients how to limit their own infection risk.

Findings: Samples from almost 40 percent of 133 patients' phones had the bacteria compared to about 21 percent of 67 healthcare workers' phones, according to the study authored by researchers at the **Inonu University** in Malatya, Turkey. Additionally, seven patient phones contained multidrug resistant (MDR) pathogens such as MRSA. By contrast, the testing didn't uncover any hospital employee phones that had MDR bacteria.