OASIS Alert

OASIS News; Expect 7 Million Health Tech Users By 2012

Self-service will drive the trend.

While health technology is still in its infancy, more than seven million people will rely on advanced technologies and electronic medical services by 2012, according to market research company **Parks Associates**.

Potential e-Health users range from seniors with chronic conditions to younger consumers who want more control over their personal health and well-being. "The home will be the central location in the new preventive-care model in health applications, with broadband enabling home medical services, telemedicine applications, and patient monitoring," the research firm predicts.

Opportunity: Providers who want to tap into this trend should get started now by "drafting business plans, forging partnerships, testing hardware and software, and conducting field trials" that will prepare them for the eventual switch to e-Health, Parks Associates says.

The firm has outlined several strategies and approaches in a white paper available on its website at www.digitalhealthnews.com.

• There's yet another HH PPS Pricer problem, although this one affects your bookkeeping more than your reimbursement.

Affected claims process with the correct reimbursement, but "the Fiscal Intermediary Standard System (FISS) does not show the new Health Insurance Prospective Payment System (HIPPS) code assigned by Pricer," **RHHI Cahaba GBA** says in a Sept. 9 message to providers. The problem affects claims with dates of service Jan. 1 or later.

• The topic of home care is proving important to some politicians this election year. On Sept. 9, Presidential hopeful **Barack Obama** (D) made a campaign stop in Bristol, VA. He dropped by the town's old-fashioned soda shop and discussed increasing home care with shop owner **Doug Ellis**, reports the Bristol Herald Courier. "Both agreed it was a good idea," the newspaper said.

In Oregon, **Sen. Gordon Smith** (R) has run TV ads accusing challenger **Jeff Merkley** (D) of cutting $4 million from a state program that furnishes home care to seniors.

The Merkley campaign says the state lawmaker merely reduced an increase to **Oregon Project Independence**, and didn't cut the program's budget, according to the Associated Press.

In Washington state, an initiative that would require home care workers to jump through several hoops, including pass a certification exam, complete more training and undergo background checks will be on the Nov. 2 ballot, AP says. The **Service Employees International Union** is a major supporter of the new initiative.

Opponents wanted the initiative thrown out because of "a major misprint on the petitions that voters signed," AP says.

• National chain Amedisys Inc. plans to buy six HHAs from **Home Health Corp. of America**. Amedisys plans to purchase two agencies each in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware, the Baton Rouge, LA-based company says in a release.

"This acquisition will expand the Company's coverage to five new counties in Maryland, a Certificate of Need state, five new counties in Pennsylvania and provide state-wide coverage in Delaware," Amedisys crows in the release. Annual revenues for the agencies combined is $23 million.

• **A coalition of long-term care providers and advocates is pushing** Congress to pass pending federal legislation that promotes the widespread adoption of health information technology.

Heath information technology could reduce medical errors, improve patient care, and stem rising health care costs, noted the coalition, which includes the **National Association for Home Care & Hospice** and its subsidary the **Home Care Technology Association of America**, in a letter sent Sept. 9 to members of the House and Senate.

Specifically, the home health care advocates want Congress to pass legislation that contains these provisions:

• a public-private process to determine standards for interoperability, product certification, quality measures and an accelerated process for standards improvement;

• financial incentives for health care providers to adopt and use health IT;

• a focus on consumer empowerment through patient and provider education about electronic health records; and

• appropriate privacy and security protections for patients.

The coalition hopes that Congress will move forward now rather than wait for "the uncertainty of the priorities of a new administration to move legislation that already has bipartisan and broad public and private support," according to the letter.