

OASIS Alert

OBQI: BATHING, AMBULATION AND MEDICATION MANAGEMENT COULD MAKE OR BREAK YOUR AGENCY

It may seem hard to describe what your agency does in three short phrases, but that hasn't stopped CMS.

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** has decided to feature three home health patient outcomes—improvement in bathing, ambulation and management of oral medications—in its publicity campaign that will publish outcomes in local newspapers, said CMS chief **Tom Scully** in a March 17 Open Door Forum for home health. The publicity is scheduled to begin this month (see related story article 4).

The outcome comparison project Home Health Compare intends to educate patients, discharge planners, physicians and other referral sources to sway their choice of home health provider. CMS plans a national rollout of the project this fall.

Regardless of the featured outcomes chosen, home health agencies are uncomfortable with the idea of their care quality being boiled down to 11 outcomes (see article 7), and then further down to three for public focus, observes **Bob Wardwell** with the **Visiting Nurse Associations of America**. The burden is on agencies to ensure that patients understand what the chosen outcomes reveal about the care they provide, says Wardwell, a former CMS senior official.

In the Open Door Forum, CMS officials said all agencies' identifying and contact information would be listed on the Home Health Compare Website. Though not up at presstime, www.medicare.gov/HHCompare/Home.asp is expected to be up and running by late April. But HHQI data will display only for the agencies in the eight pilot states.