

## OASIS Alert

### Quality Monitoring: CASE THE JOINT

There's a wealth of information right under your nose that could be the key to unlocking more efficient patient care, more referrals and more money in your pocket your case mix report.

These reports are chock-full of information that home health agencies can use to their advantage, cheers consultant **M. Elaine Graves** with **MEG Associates Consulting Group** in Hudson, CO. The patient demographic data alone are enough to point agencies that want to focus their efforts in the right direction, she says. For example, HHAs can tell with a quick glance what kind of patients make up the majority of their populations, and can adjust their patient care efforts accordingly, Graves notes.

Agencies should take into account the data about their patient population's characteristics when making decisions about patient care delivery, according to the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services'** manual titled "Quality Monitoring Using Case Mix and Adverse Event Outcome Reports." These decisions include whether to develop or change "policies, procedures, and protocols; possible care path development or disease management approaches; obtaining or developing patient education materials; and examining potential areas where increased care coordination may be indicated," HHS says.

The demographic information in these reports also can highlight areas where agencies need to set their sights for the first time ever. An agency might realize when looking at the report that it has begun serving a large number of patients with limited English proficiency, suggested consultant **Cynthia Hohmann** at a recent audioconference sponsored by the **American Association for Home-care**. In that case, the agency might want to consider hiring more bilingual nurses, Hohmann offered.

Similarly, the case mix report will tell you if a large number of your patients have certain physical limitations your agency should make an effort to accommodate, said Hohmann, with **Health Care Management Consulting** in Jacksonville, FL. For example, it can tell you if a large percentage of your patients are visually impaired in which case you might consider developing handouts with larger print to facilitate easier reading, she counseled.

Also, your case mix report includes invaluable information about where your agency's referrals are coming from, Hohmann noted. By examining this information, you'll know where to direct your marketing efforts. "If you have less than the national average for getting referrals from nursing homes, you might want to concentrate more on [improving] that for the rest of the year," she said.