



HOME Front

Late Summer 2009

CMS Increases Effort to Collect Overpayments to Agencies

In an effort to step up collections of money on perceived overpayments to providers, aggressive strides are being taken to accelerate recouping of Medicare dollars and relieve the strained national health care budget. CMS has adopted a massive recovery audit program by employing RACs (Recovery Audit Contractors) to flag claims that have already been paid where they perceive any discrepancy. Their said goal is to push health care facilities, doctors and home health agencies to correctly document and coordinate their care plans to insure that a more nationalized, evidence-based healthcare structure is in place and that supporting medical documentation and claim payment levels are appropriate.

These independent medical collection agencies, RACs, are hired by CMS and paid a fee as an incentive to find overpayments. "The number of visits will surely be a focus of the RAC program," says Carol Elrod, Director of Continuing Quality Improvement for AT Home Care. "Our primary focus is to deliver quality home health care. I am confident that with the correct documentation, we will be able to justify any of our care plans."

CMS will conduct two kinds of reviews: Automated reviews which are intended to find simple errors, such as duplicate claims, and do not involve record requests. Complex reviews are intended to identify more serious errors through medical record audits. Home health agencies will be randomly audited based on target areas Medicare has identified as problematic, including: Coding, Therapy, Medical Necessity and Homebound status.

New Faces at AT Home Care

Eric Ralston, Mona Overturf and Rachel Wisecarver have joined the ATHC Marketing Team. Eric will be using his medical sales experience to increase business in Fredericksburg. Mona will be teaming up with Kelly Woods in the VA beach area, and Rachel will be expanding our business in Williamsburg. Welcome!

Private Care Division Opens up Offices on Monument Avenue

Lauren Boykin and Mary Squares have moved the Private Staffing division of AT Home Care to 3900 Monument Avenue. Their business has grown over the last year to include over 50 employees and is active in Charlottesville, Tri-Cities and Richmond. CNAs and companions are available for long or short term stays. "With all the foot traffic coming in and out of the office, it makes sense to establish our own offices," says Lauren. "We are really happy with the space and enjoy our new views out onto Monument Avenue." They may be reached at **804-358-0631 and 804-497-2112 Fax. Good Luck Ladies!**

AT Home Care Launching Wireless System In September

By now you have heard the buzz about a new wireless communications and documentation system that will be the cornerstone of AT Home Care's operations in and out of the field. Homecare Homebase connects nurses in the field with doctors, other clinicians and AT Home Care office staff to streamline agency operations and maximize quality care to our patients. Validation of the system is underway as each area of the company inputs their data and works to customize the "work flow" requirements to meet their needs.

This wireless system will be PDA based and is able to sync home care visit data in as little as two minutes back to the office through handheld PDAs. It also will reduce paper use by over 90%. Everything will be entered into the PDA and will be backed up. Old files can be scanned to digital format and stored. Even Human Resource records will be digitized, freeing up office space where file cabinets once lined the walls. "Achieving a paperless environment adds to the green initiative that we embarked on with our carbon credit purchases earlier this year," says Ed Kassab. "The software allows more real time communication amongst the care team and will allow us to deliver an improved level of care to a larger patient base", adds Ed enthusiastically.

There's No Place Like Home inspired the Wizard of Oz theme which will launch at the training session August 18th for select AT Home Care staff trainees being dubbed "Wizards". They in turn will begin training all employees starting **September 21st**. Keep in touch with your branch managers for when to sign up for your training.

H1N1 (Swine Flu) Vaccine Will be Distributed Slowly

The flu season will be complicated this season by at least two strains of flu, the Seasonal Influenza variety and the H1N1 (swine flu). Some health officials predict that 1 out of 4 people will contract at least one variety. In preparation, the CDC has listed the recommendations of people (**Priority Group 1**) for vaccination:

- * Pregnant women
- * Household contacts and caregivers of infants <6 months of age
- * Healthcare and EMS personnel
- * All persons 6mo -24 years of age
- * Persons 25-64 years of age who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza

Small lots can be expected in the beginning phase of distribution.

Expect distribution to start in October through schools and medical practices.

AT Home Care is expected to receive vaccines sometime in October and will be given out as the supply comes in at the branch offices.

Symptoms are similar to those of Seasonal influenza which include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people will experience runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Expect diagnostic screening if you have a fever of 100.4 + and a cough. Ill persons should stay home until they have been fever free for 24 hours without taking any temperature lowering medication before returning to work. The virus can live hours or longer on surfaces such as cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks.



Ed with Leukemia survivor, Harrison Strickler, and family at the Pediatric Cancer benefit bike ride held in June.



Home Health Agencies Meet to Address the Challenges of New Government Requirements

The Virginia Association of Homecare (VAHC) will address the RAC reviews at its annual leadership conference in Staunton, VA, September 21-22. Clinical Directors, Compliance Officers and Agency CEOs will share information on how to meet the increased government demands on agencies which threaten reimbursement for services as well as the exorbitant time demands required by extensive forms. These audits will review paid claims and flag anything that may be perceived as not conforming to Medicare guidelines. Medicare is being targeted to provide over \$300 billion worth of cuts to fund Obama's government run health care plan resulting in a cut of 5% for home health care alone.

"There will be an opportunity for agencies to defend their documentation and plan of care," says Carol Elrod, Director Continuing Quality Improvement, who will be presenting case studies for review in preparation of RAC audits