

CMS' New Primary-Care Payment Model Projected to Affect 20,000 Physicians: The CMS' new primary-care model seeks to reimburse practices with a monthly fee to manage care for as many as 25 million patients. This move marks the CMS' largest plan to transform and improve how primary care is delivered and reimbursed across the nation. Titled "The Comprehensive Primary Care Plus" initiative, it will be implemented in up to 20 regions and include up to 5,000 practices, which would encompass more than 20,000 doctors and clinicians. The CMS has yet to identify regions since it must first assess interest by payers and providers since the program would collaborate with commercial, state, and other federal insurance plans. There are two tracks available for practices to participate. Under Track 1, CMS will pay a monthly fee to practices that provide specific services. That fee is in addition to the fee-for-service payments under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for care. In Track 2, practices will also receive a monthly care management fee and, instead of full Medicare fee-for-service payments for evaluation and management services, they will receive reduced Medicare fee-for-service payments and up-front comprehensive primary-care payments. The CMS believes the Track 2 hybrid payment design will allow greater flexibility in how practices deliver care outside of the traditional face-to-face encounter. Practices in both tracks will receive upfront incentive payments that they might have to repay if they do not perform well on quality and utilization metrics. The CMS will accept practice applications in the determined regions from July 15 through September 1, 2016.

Computerized Systems Still Miss Major Drug Errors: A new study reveals that computerized systems meant to restrict prescribing errors routinely fail to detect harmful – and sometimes fatal – medication orders. The study found that computerized provider order-entry systems failed to flag nearly 2 out of every 5 incidents where the wrong drug was prescribed, the incorrect dosage was requested or follow-up reminders failed to appear. While the software can alert physicians to medication conflicts, identify patients' potential allergic reactions and incorporate evidence-based guidance and recommendations, it does have its limitations. Some of the challenges computerized systems have include usability issues, such as the potential for selecting the wrong item from drop-down menus or having too many alerts, which providers can override. The study found that the systems failed to flag 39% of potentially harmful drug orders and 13% of potentially fatal ones, with the most common issues missed being wrong medications and wrong dosages.

Governor Signs Bill Allowing Physicians to Dispense Dietary Supplements: On January 19, 2016, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie signed Assembly Bill No. 4133 (2015), which closes a loophole in the law that allowed chiropractors to dispense supplements, but not physicians. The legislation, which went into effect on the date it was signed, permits physicians and podiatric physicians to dispense nutritional supplements to their patients. Physicians and podiatrists are now authorized without limitation to dispense food concentrates, food extracts, vitamins, minerals, herbs, enzymes, amino acids, tissue or cell salts, glandular extracts, nutraceuticals, botanicals, homeopathic remedies, and other nutritional supplements. The law creates another exception to a law that prohibits doctors from dispensing more than a seven-day supply of drugs or medicine to patients and imposing no more than a 10 percent administrative fee on the cost of the medicine. The law previously exempted chiropractors from the restrictions when dispensing certain nutritional supplements.

The legislation was co-sponsored by Assemblyman Thomas p. Giblin (D-34), Assemblywoman Nancy J. Pinkin (D-18), and Senators Nilsa Cruz-Perez (D-5) and Diane B. Allen (R-7). "This bill allows patients to access vitamins and health supplements provided by a physician they know and trust," Cruz-Perez said in a press release. "Additionally, they have the assurance that these prescriptions are coming from a professional who knows their medical history."

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