

Care coordination: physician involvement

ISSUE: Understanding how beneficiaries use physicians should shed light on how beneficiaries might benefit from care coordination.

KEY POINTS: Medicare beneficiaries often see multiple physicians. Some physicians, or perhaps even one physician, may be more central to a beneficiaries' care than others. Care coordination is intended to improve communication among physicians about beneficiaries' care.

In our efforts to understand who is most in need of care management services, and the role physicians have in managing beneficiary care, we observed patterns of physician care for a select group of beneficiaries with various combinations of diabetes, coronary artery disease (CAD), or congestive heart failure (CHF). We analyzed a 5 percent sample of inpatient, outpatient, and physician/supplier file claims for 2003 to observe the number of beneficiaries with combinations of these conditions and the dollars spent for their different types of care. We observed the number of physicians they saw for their care, and by looking at patterns of payment, whether some physicians were more central than others. We also looked at whether their physician care was primarily for services associated with their condition or for other health services.

ACTION: The Commissioners should discuss the implications of the data analysis for developing strategies to coordinate care.

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