

Hospice Visit Patterns

ISSUE: In March 2009, the Commission recommended moving away from the current hospice payment system – a flat per diem payment – to one where the per diem payment rate varies over the course of an episode to better match hospices’ provision of care at the end of life. The Commission recommended that this change be made by 2013, which would allow time for additional data to be collected on hospice service use and costs that could inform payment system reform. Since making that recommendation, two new sources of patient-level data on hospice visits have become available to us and we have analyzed that data.

KEY POINTS: In this paper, we discuss the initial results of our analyses of these newly available data sources. We examine how hospice visit patterns (number of visits, type of visits, and duration of visits) varies by length of stay, diagnosis, location of care, and other hospice characteristics. The intent of this work is to confirm whether the general findings about hospice visit intensity in our previous work are observed more broadly in these additional data sources, and to glean additional perspective on hospice visit patterns that could further inform hospice payment system reform.

ACTION: Commissioners should discuss issues raised by this research and provide feedback on specific issues they would like staff to pursue further.

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