

Expert panel: New research on use of imaging services

ISSUE: Technological progress has increased the importance of imaging in diagnosis and treatment and expanded the availability of imaging services in non-hospital settings, such as freestanding centers and physicians' offices. While diagnostic imaging can lead to improved detection, treatment, and health, the rapid and sustained growth in the volume of imaging services for Medicare beneficiaries, as well as geographic variations in imaging use, have raised concerns about whether some of this growth represents inappropriate use.

The members of this expert panel will discuss recent research they and their organizations have conducted on the growth of imaging, factors influencing volume growth, geographic variations in the use of imaging, and options for reducing inappropriate use of services. The panelists include:

Lawrence Casalino, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Health Studies, University of Chicago

Laurence C. Baker, Ph.D., Professor of Health Research and Policy, Stanford University School of Medicine

Bruce Steinwald, Director, Health Care Team, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)

KEY POINTS: Dr. Casalino will present findings from a synthesis report on the impact of physician self-referral, which was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Dr. Baker will discuss research he has conducted on geographic variations in imaging volume and the influence of physician self-referral on the use of imaging services. Mr. Steinwald will describe GAO's recent report on Medicare Part B imaging services.

ACTION: After the panelists make brief presentations, Commissioners will have the opportunity to ask the panelists questions and discuss issues that arise.

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