

Caring for Medicare beneficiaries with mental illnesses

ISSUE: Monitoring the adequacy of payments to inpatient psychiatric facilities (IPFs) under the new IPF prospective payment system will be crucial to ensuring access to inpatient care for Medicare beneficiaries with severe mental illnesses. But improving the quality of care provided to this vulnerable population requires a broader look at the mental health care system.

KEY POINTS: In this paper, we discuss: the IPF PPS and report trends in the use of inpatient psychiatric services; Medicare's coverage of other mental health services; access to mental health care and racial disparities in diagnosis and treatment; quality of care including the use of comparative-effectiveness research in mental health care, the development of quality measures, and the use of medical homes for people with mental disorders; and special challenges facing dual-eligible beneficiaries who suffer from mental illnesses.

ACTION: Commissioners should discuss issues raised by this research and decide if there are specific issues they would like staff to pursue further.

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