

Updates to the methods used to assess the adequacy of Medicare payments for physician and other health professional services

ISSUE: The Commission annually assesses the adequacy of payments for physician and other health professional services. Two components of this assessment are counting the number and type of clinicians who provide services to beneficiaries and the volume of services furnished. We propose refinements to both of these analyses for our March 2020 report to the Congress.

KEY POINTS: We estimate that the number of hospitalists billing Medicare increased rapidly from 2010 to 2017. Prior to 2017, hospitalists did not have a separate specialty code. Because of this, the Commission has historically included many hospitalists in its count of primary care physicians. After excluding hospitalists, the growth in the number of primary care physicians billing Medicare from 2010 to 2017 was slower than previously estimated. For our volume analysis, we propose to replace our historic volume analyses with two sets of analyses intended to more clearly differentiate spending and access trends.

ACTION: Commissioners will review and discuss the material.