

Developing Outpatient Therapy Payment Alternatives

Research Triangle International is looking for therapy practices to volunteer in a data collection process designed to develop therapy payment alternatives for outpatient Medicare beneficiaries.

Outpatient Therapy services have been identified by CMS as accounting for a small but growing share of Medicare expenditures. Concern about rising utilization was one of the major reasons Congress imposed the annual financial cap on Medicare therapy services in 1997. Multiple studies have been undertaken since that time in an attempt to develop an alternative to the cap, but a permanent solution has not been found, in part because it is difficult to evaluate spending for outpatient therapy services without reliable documentation on the care needs of beneficiaries and the outcomes of care.

CMS awarded a contract to Research Triangle International to undertake a study to develop recommendations designed to lead to a new method of paying for outpatient OT, PT and SLP. CMS realized that it cannot adequately assess the appropriateness of utilization patterns or the impact of changes in payment policy without access to better data defining patient need and outcomes of outpatient therapy services.

The purposes of this project are to identify, collect, and analyze this data. The ultimate goal is to develop payment method alternatives to the current financial cap on outpatient therapy services. APTA and AOTA have worked closely with RTI on the project.

Participation is voluntary and consists of data collection by the patient and provider. If your clinic is interested in participating, details are available on the official project website at: <http://optherapy.rti.org/> or by contacting Brieanne Lyda-McDonald, the Deputy Project Director at 919-541-6694 or by e-mail at: blmcdonald@rti.org.