

AAFP News: *AFP* Edition

Policy and Health Issues in the News

AAFP Renews Fight for Coverage of Preventive Health Services for Women

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) recently appealed to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to guarantee private health insurance coverage of women's preventive health services—including contraception—with no out-of-pocket costs as mandated by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). In a letter to CMS Administrator Seema Verma, MPH, AAFP Board Chair John Meigs, MD, offered a response to two interim final rules published in the October 13 Federal Register that are “designed to expand exemptions to protect religious or moral beliefs” for some entities and individuals who offer health insurance plans that are subject to mandated contraceptive coverage. The letter specified the two regulations in question: “Religious Exemptions and Accommodations for Coverage of Certain Preventive Services Under the ACA” and “Moral Exemptions and Accommodations for Coverage of Certain Preventive Services Under the ACA.” The AAFP called on CMS to immediately withdraw these two interim final rules so that women do not lose coverage. The letter listed some of the unintended consequences of decreasing access to vital health services for women; for instance, unplanned pregnancies often delay prenatal care, which can result in increased risk of birth defects, low-birth-weight infants, and poor mental and physical function in early childhood. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/government-medicine/20171130womenspreventive.html>.

New Online Tool Lets Physicians View Status of CMS Quality Measures

CMS recently announced a new resource designed to give physicians and other health care stakeholders a better understanding of the agency's measures used in various quality, reporting, and payment programs. The new Measures Inventory Tool is an interactive web-based application that CMS says increases transparency. It provides a complete list of measures that are under development, have been implemented, or have been removed from CMS quality programs and initiatives. The tool allows users to search for and find measures quickly; compile and refine sets of related measures; identify measures across the continuum of care; and coordinate measurement efforts across all conditions, settings, and populations. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/practice-professional-issues/20171128measurestool.html>.

Survey: Family Physicians Continue Move to New Payment Models

A growing number of family physicians are making the transition to value-based payment models despite some skepticism and obstacles, according to a recent survey conducted by the AAFP. The survey, which was sponsored by Humana, asked family physicians about their participation in value-based payment programs and compared the results to those of a similar survey conducted in 2015. About 47% of respondents in the recent survey said they are actively pursuing value-based payment programs—an increase from 44% in 2015—and 54% of practices are updating their technology systems to prepare to transition to new payment models. In addition, awareness of the new models is growing, with 60% of physicians saying they are extremely or somewhat familiar with them, up from 57% in 2015. Despite the increasing numbers of family physicians who have adopted value-based payment models, barriers remain. Lack of staff time was cited by 90% of respondents in the recent survey, and a lack of evidence that meeting performance measures leads to better patient care was cited by 62%. Another ongoing challenge to adoption of value-based payment is finding a way to use nonuniform performance reports from different insurers to bolster patient care. More than one-third of survey respondents said they were paid by 10 or more insurers during 2017. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/practice-professional-issues/20171205valuebasedpayment.html>.

Free Physician Well-Being CME Videos

The AAFP recently added three free videos to the Physician Health First portal that launched at the Academy's 2017 Family Medicine Experience. The portal was created as part of a focus on physician well-being—one of the AAFP's strategic goals—in light of research showing that physician burnout is at an all-time high. The videos include *Becoming a More Relaxed, Healthy Physician*; *Creating a Thriving Practice Culture*; and *Leadership Skills for Non-leaders*. Each of these self-study, on-demand sessions is free to AAFP members and worth up to 1.25 continuing medical education (CME) credits. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/focus-on-physician-well-being/20171110wellbeingcme.html>.

—AAFP and AAFP NEWS STAFF

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