

JUL - 9 2015

Administrator
Washington, DC 20201

Reid B. Blackwelder, M.D., FAAFP Board Chair American Academy of Family Physicians 1133 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 1100 Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Blackwelder:

Thank you for your letter asking the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to cover the shingles (zoster), tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccines, and all other vaccines that the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends under Medicare Part B. You also asked that CMS develop related educational materials for beneficiaries and providers.

I share your interest in promoting wellness and access to preventive services. The Social Security Act specifically authorizes Medicare Part B coverage for hepatitis B, influenza, and pneumococcal vaccines if certain eligibility criteria are met. Generally, Medicare Part D (Medicare prescription drug plans) covers vaccines that are not covered under Medicare Part B when the vaccine is needed to prevent illness.

Under the authority granted by Section 1861(ddd) of the Social Security Act, CMS is authorized to add coverage of "additional preventive services" (apart from those already specified in the Medicare statute) if those services are determined to meet certain criteria via the Medicare national coverage determination process. One requirement is that the item or service must be recommended by the United States Preventive Services Task Force with a grade of A or B. At this time, the statute does not permit expanded coverage for vaccines based on ACIP recommendations (See 75 Fed. Reg. 73,170, 73,413 (November 29, 2010)). In cases that do not involve preventive services, such as coverage of Tdap for treatment purposes post-exposure, coverage determinations would be made by local Medicare contractors, in the absence of a national coverage policy.

I appreciate all of the work that you do on behalf of family physicians and the patients they serve. I look forward to working with you on additional areas of mutual interest.

Sincerely,

Andrew M. Slavitt Acting Administrator