

## **Details Released on 'Home Health Compare' Updates for 2005**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) supplies information about quality of provider services through its [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) website. Medicare home health agencies (HHAs) can be located, and information on them accessed, via CMS's "Home Health Compare" tool on the site; users scroll down the page and click on a link that reads, "Compare Home Health Agencies in Your Area."

CMS updates the site on a regular basis. HHA demographic information is updated monthly as new and corrected information is received from state agencies. Home health quality information is updated quarterly; the schedule for those specific 2005 updates is:

<b>Date of Release (2005)</b>	<b>Outcome Data Collection Time Frames</b>
March 3	December 2003 through November 2004
June 3	March 2004 through February 2005
September 1	June 2004 through May 2005
December 1	September 2004 through August 2005

### **Information about Medicare-certified HHAs available through Home Care Compare includes:**

- Name, address, and phone number of the agency,
- Medicare-covered services offered by the agency (nursing care, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, medical/social services, and home health aide),
- Date of agency's initial Medicare certification, and
- Type of agency's ownership (for-profit, government, or non-profit).

Home Health Compare provides information on HHAs' performance on quality measures, which is intended to indicate to users how well an agency provides care for patients. Those measures track information about patients' physical and mental health, and whether their ability to perform basic daily activities is maintained or improved. Users can compare data on the quality measures among HHAs.

**The quality measures tracked include:**

- Four measures related to improvement in mobility,
- Four measures related to meeting the patient's activities of daily living,
- Two measures related to patient medical emergencies, and
- One measure related to improvement in mental health.

CMS announced a recent Home Health, Hospice, and Durable Medicare Equipment Open Door Forum that plans are underway to change the quality measures now publicly reported on Home Health Compare. The planned changes are to be based on the draft recommendations of the National Quality Forum (NQF), the CMS contractor charged with identifying quality measures for public reporting.

In the next iteration of Home Health Compare, due to be released sometime this year, CMS will cease reporting on patient improvement in upper body dressing, confusion, and toileting, as well as stabilization in bathing. In place of those measures, CMS will add improvement in surgical wounds, dyspnea, and urinary incontinence, and discharge to the community.

***Editors Note:*** *The March 9, 2005 IAHC Spring Meeting Seminar is devoted to the "Home Health Compare Initiative". It will be presented by the Iowa Foundation for Medical Care.*