

Some State-to-State Disparities Emerge in National Home Health Hospitalization Reduction Study

The ongoing Briggs National Home Health Hospitalization Reduction Study, cosponsored by the National Association for Home Care & Hospice and Fazzi Associates, has released a breakdown by state with some notable findings on the number of agencies whose hospitalization scores were 19 percent or less. These top-scoring agencies are the focus of the study.

This study is a national effort directed at identifying best practices that agencies have employed most effectively to lower unplanned and/or preventable hospitalizations of home care patients. To accomplish this, the study will use data from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) sources to focus in on the top 10 percent of agencies that have the lowest hospitalization rates. While the national average for hospitalization from the home health care setting is 28 percent, agencies involved in this study have hospitalization rates averaging 19 percent or lower, as recorded in their March 3, 2005, Outcome-Based Quality Improvement (OBQI) and Home Health Compare scores.

This just-released breakdown reveals that a number of states, primarily in the West and Mountain regions of the country, have significantly higher numbers of agencies achieving the 19 percent or lower hospitalization rates. Other states in the Northeast (particularly New England) have lower numbers of agencies now performing at this threshold.

In releasing the breakdown, study Co-Director Dr. Robert Fazzi noted that the numbers clearly indicate there may be other factors beyond practice influencing hospitalization rates. "It may be the rural nature of some of the states or the effects of managed care penetration that might affect the outcomes -- or something that we have yet to look at," Fazzi said. "What is clear is that we will need to look at other factors beyond just practice as the study proceeds."

In an effort to ensure that all factors are considered in the study, the project is exploring ways for professionals in the home care field to make suggestions on which practices and other issues they believe should be addressed. "Our goal is to involve the entire field in helping to shape the focus of the study and later the dissemination of the findings," explained Cyndi Rohret, a clinical consultant with major study sponsor Briggs Corp. She continued, "While our ultimate goal is to identify and share best practices for reducing hospitalization with the field, we also want to develop insights that can help explain some of the differences we are finding."

An announcement is expected from the project shortly on how agencies can make recommendations for areas they believe should be investigated. The "study phase" of the project is expected to run from June through September, with resultant findings and best practice strategies slated to be shared across the home health field during the fourth quarter this year.

The state by state breakdown is as follows:

National Hospitalization Reduction Study, State Breakdown

| Number and Percent Eligible by State | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------|
| State | Total Agencies recorded | Total Low Hosp | % Low Hosp |
| AK | 12 | 5 | 41.7 |
| AL | 139 | 6 | 4.3 |
| AR | 164 | 5 | 3.0 |
| AZ | 62 | 11 | 17.7 |
| CA | 506 | 116 | 22.9 |
| CO | 108 | 14 | 13.0 |
| CT | 80 | 4 | 5.0 |
| DC | 12 | 1 | 8.3 |
| DE | 12 | 0 | 0.0 |
| FL | 433 | 102 | 23.6 |
| GA | 92 | 11 | 12.0 |
| HI | 13 | 3 | 23.1 |
| IA | 156 | 13 | 8.3 |
| ID | 48 | 9 | 18.8 |
| IL | 274 | 21 | 7.7 |
| IN | 143 | 12 | 8.4 |
| KS | 114 | 15 | 13.2 |
| KY | 99 | 1 | 1.0 |
| LA | 218 | 6 | 2.8 |
| MA | 105 | 0 | 0.0 |
| MD | 42 | 2 | 4.8 |
| ME | 29 | 4 | 13.8 |
| MI | 217 | 22 | 10.1 |
| MN | 162 | 17 | 10.5 |
| MO | 145 | 21 | 14.5 |
| MS | 57 | 4 | 7.0 |
| MT | 33 | 12 | 36.4 |
| NC | 161 | 5 | 3.1 |
| ND | 25 | 10 | 40.0 |
| NE | 60 | 12 | 20.0 |
| NH | 32 | 0 | 0.0 |
| NJ | 51 | 1 | 2.0 |
| NM | 48 | 8 | 16.7 |
| NV | 43 | 9 | 20.9 |
| NY | 185 | 6 | 3.2 |
| OH | 291 | 16 | 5.5 |
| OK | 176 | 6 | 3.4 |
| OR | 58 | 23 | 39.7 |
| PA | 225 | 32 | 14.2 |
| P.R. | 45 | 2 | 4.4 |
| RI | 21 | 2 | 9.5 |
| SC | 64 | 1 | 1.6 |
| SD | 38 | 17 | 44.7 |
| TN | 133 | 7 | 5.3 |
| TX | 956 | 56 | 5.9 |
| UT | 43 | 10 | 23.3 |
| VA | 144 | 10 | 6.9 |
| VT | 12 | 0 | 0.0 |
| WA | 53 | 15 | 28.3 |

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| WI | 102 | 12 | 11.8 |
| WV | 61 | 8 | 13.1 |
| WY | 24 | 2 | 8.3 |

Source: National Home Health Hospitalization Reduction Study