Medicare Advantage Plans Address Chronic Disease: Diabetes

Diabetes is a significant and growing healthcare problem in the U.S, especially among Medicare beneficiaries. Diabetes is a complex disease that requires daily care from multiple providers, complex medication routines, and consistent monitoring. Care coordination is critical to ensure appropriate treatment and minimizing disease progression. Medicare Advantage (MA) plans are well equipped to provide the care diabetes patients need most -- comprehensive high quality, affordable coverage with innovative and targeted services.

Diabetes Key Facts and Statistics:
Diabetes Affects Seniors Disproportionately: Over 29.1 million or 9.3% of the population is diagnosed with diabetes in the U.S. For Medicare beneficiaries age 65 and over the prevalence is even higher with 25.9%, or 11.8 million seniors estimated to have the chronic disease.

Minorities Have High Rates of Diabetes: Among the Medicare population, 40% of Hispanics, 40% of African Americans, 39% of Asians/Pacific Islanders, and 40% of American Indian and Alaskan natives suffer from diabetes.

Diabetes is a Driver of Healthcare Costs: Total estimated costs of diagnosed diabetes have increased 41%, to $245 billion in 2012 from $174 billion in 2007. Additionally, 10% of all health care dollars are spent treating diabetes and its complications.

MA Plans Achieve Results and Improved Healthcare Outcomes
Medicare Advantage plans have demonstrated their value and success in treating Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes through leadership in executing disease management, care coordination, and other practices that have demonstrated better healthcare outcomes and beneficiary care. Peer reviewed research has found:

- MA performance of eye tests for individuals with diabetes was reported 17% higher than FFS.
- A study published in the January 2012 edition of Health Affairs found beneficiaries with diabetes in a MA special needs plan (SNP) had “seven percent more primary care physician office visits; nine percent lower hospital admission rates; 19 percent fewer hospital days; and 28 percent fewer hospital readmissions compared to patients in FFS Medicare.”
- Research published in the American Journal of Managed Care and co-authored by researchers affiliated with The Brookings Institution and Harvard University Department of Economics, concluded that Medicare Advantage plans outperformed the Medicare FFS program in 9 out of 11 clinical quality measures (4 were diabetes measures).
MA Plans Provide Critical Care Coordination for Diabetes Patients

The Medicare Advantage program offers many benefits which are not offered by the Medicare Fee-for-Service program to address the unique and complex needs of beneficiaries with diabetes. These additional benefits include care coordination and disease management activities:

- Comprehensive case and disease management programs
- Wellness and prevention programs
- Coordinated care programs
- Prescription drug management tools integrated with medical benefits
- Tools and data collection to address disparities in care for minorities
- Nurse help hotlines
- Enhanced coverage of home infusion, personal care and durable medical equipment
- Vision, hearing, and dental benefits coordination

MA plans develop specific and targeted coordination and disease management strategies designed to address the unique needs of chronic disease. Examples of activities to address diabetes include:

- Specialized diabetes centers with health care providers that provide monitoring, nutrition guidance, and medication reviews.
- Glycolic management and improvement hot lines
- Care coordinators to seamlessly coordinate primary care visits, annual dental check-ups, regular podiatry care, and medication reviews.
- Online and telephonic tools to assist diabetes care such as automatic reminders and step by step instructions for daily care activities

Care coordination is critical to ensure appropriate and high quality care is being delivered to beneficiaries with diabetes. These practices will ensure Medicare beneficiaries are managing their chronic disease and minimizing disease progression and complications.

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Data obtained from: http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/statistics/?loc=db-slabnav


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