
SPECIALTY PHARMACY NEWS

With CMS's OCM Set to Start July 1, The US Oncology Network Preps Practices

Although CMS has yet to make an announcement, a spokesperson for the agency confirms that the Oncology Care Model (OCM) will start July 1. The US Oncology Network spoke with *SPN* about what it's doing to help prepare practices for the launch.

According to the Association of Community Cancer Centers, in March CMS's Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation offered invitations to more than 100 applicants. The CMS spokesperson says the list of participants is not public yet. More than 400 practices and 40 payers submitted letters of intent to participate. Diana Verrilli, vice president and general manager of Payer & Provider Solutions for McKesson Specialty Health, the parent company of The US Oncology Network (*SPN* 11/10, p. 1), tells *SPN* that "12 practices affiliated with The US Oncology Network have elected to participate in the Oncology Care Model pilot."

In May, The US Oncology Network held a two-day boot camp for physicians, administrators and clinical staffers from practices tapped by CMS to participate in the five-year program. "Some of the key issues addressed were knowledge of key process areas: treatment plan, patient navigation, access to care 24/7, patient education, surveillance during treatment, survivorship and advance care planning," says Verrilli. Also covered were "expanded technology tools for The US Oncology Network to provide process and workflow automation to identify patients for the OCM, assist providers with decision support, patient navigation and quality metrics reporting."

Three practices in The US Oncology Network have been testing an OCM pilot for the past several months. Through that, "we have been able to identify and address potential issues early," she says. "Key learnings from the pilot will be shared with other participating practices, which should help address some concerns."

Oncology Care Model Starts July 1

CMS unveiled the multipayer initiative, aimed at providing better oncology care and care coordination for Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries at a lower cost to the program, in February 2015 (*SPN* 2/15, p. 4). The OCM will reimburse providers for episodes of care in the administration of chemotherapy. "Nearly all cancers" will

be included in the initiative, which also will allow beneficiaries to have 24-hour access to providers.

Payments to providers will "include financial and performance accountability," and OCM has a two-part payment system: (1) a per-beneficiary per-month payment of \$160 for an episode's duration for "effectively managing and coordinating care," and (2) a possible performance-based payment for episodes of care that "will incentivize practices to lower the total cost of care and improve care for beneficiaries during treatment episodes." The latter payment will be available only for providers who care for people with "high-volume cancers for which it is possible to calculate reliable benchmarks." CMS estimates that these cancers cover about 90% of Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries who are getting chemotherapy.

Episodes of care are for six months starting with chemotherapy administration per a Part B claim or an initial chemotherapy claim under Part D and will include all Parts A and B services a beneficiary receives during that period of time, as well as some Part D costs. Episodes beyond the initial six months are possible as well when beneficiaries continue treatment beyond then.

Many Changes Will Need Made

Transitioning from fee-for-service to value-based care will be no small feat for participants. "At the core of the OCM, change includes adoption of the patient care delivery process that meets the expectations of the OCM program and other alternative payment models," explains Verrilli. "Practices will need to be proficient in team care, patient navigation and reporting and tracking quality metrics. The US Oncology Network already has a formal clinical pathways program, a core requirement of the OCM, and is building an analytics platform for rapid feedback and continuous learning."

"The OCM expects participating practices to focus on quality care while lowering health care costs for patients," she says. "Practices participating in the OCM need to adopt team care and patient navigation to keep people as well as possible during therapy."

For more information on the OCM, visit <http://innovation.cms.gov/initiatives/Oncology-Care>. Contact Verrilli through Claire Crye at claire.crye@mckesson.com. ✧