Participation in Quality Reporting Soared in 2008

BY JOYCE FRIEDEN

Physicians and other health professionals participating in Medicare's Physician Quality Reporting Initiative received a total of $92 million in incentive payments under the program in 2008, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced.

That figure is nearly three times the $36 million paid out in 2007, the agency noted. The number of medical professionals receiving payments also increased during the same period, from 57,000 to 85,000. The average payment in 2008 was more than $1,000, with the largest single payment at $98,000. During 2007, the reporting period lasted only 6 months for all participants, while in 2008 participants could report for a 6- or 12-month period.

"More health professionals have successfully reported data, and the substantial growth in the national total for PQRI incentive payments demonstrates that Medicare can align payment with quality incentives," acting CMS administrator Charlene Frizerra said in a statement.

Under Medicare's PQRI program, providers receive incentive payments for reporting data on quality measures. The incentive payments currently amount to 1.5% of each provider's total estimated allowed charges under Medicare Part B. Although more than 153,000 health professionals participated in the program during 2008, only 85,000 met the requirements for satisfactory reporting and therefore received incentive payments.

To make participation easier, the CMS expanded the number of reportable measures, from 74 in 2007 to 119 in 2008. The states with the highest overall provider payments were Florida ($7.5 million) and Illinois ($6 million). ■