

Florida Medicaid to Focus on Care Management

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WASHINGTON — A focus on specific diseases and patient needs can improve care and reduce costs to Medicaid by keeping patients healthier and out of hospitals, John Sory said at a meeting sponsored by the Center for Health Transformation.

Pfizer Health Solutions, a care management subsidiary of Pfizer, Inc., has applied such an approach to Florida's Medicaid program, the fourth largest program in the country, said Mr. Sory, the company's vice president.

The company partners with health care and community organizations to implement patient-centered programs that focus on prevention, disease management, and care coordination.

Through an agreement with Florida Medicaid, "we took responsibility for improving the health of a significant part of the Medicaid population, through creation of a program that connects 10 hospital systems around the state, trains nurse care managers employed by those hospitals, provides clinical technologies to support the nurses, distributes medical equipment to patients' homes, and guarantees that the better patient health will reduce overall cost of care for this population," Mr. Sory said.

The state's Medicaid program has more than 2 million beneficiaries and takes up 24% of the state's budget. Nearly 50% of expenditures are spent on institutional

services such as hospitals and nursing homes.

Access to care is a significant issue for Medicaid beneficiaries in Florida. Although the number of health care providers in Florida has increased in recent years, there has also been a notable decrease in number of providers willing to see Medicaid patients, he said.

Prevalence of chronic disease and unhealthy behaviors has been rising in the Medicaid population in Florida. There is low treatment compliance because patients "don't necessarily know what steps they can take to be healthier," Mr. Sory said. In addition, there are few tests and services for those who need monitoring, coordination, and continual follow-up.

Pfizer Health Solutions began in 2001 with a goal of looking at specific populations—patients with asthma, heart failure, hypertension, and diabetes—with an eye to decreasing Medicaid costs for them, he said.

Working with the state's government, Pfizer Health Solutions identified diagnoses and comorbidities then "built a network around those patients, to find new care managers who could work with them, and match the intensity of the intervention with the patients' diseases."

For example, high-risk patients that tend

to visit the emergency department would receive more intensive intervention from care managers.

"Patient-centered care" means instructing patients on when and how to call their physician, he explained. Some patients don't interact with the health care system except in the emergency department, so they're not ready to handle hour-long phone conversations with a nurse.

Coordination of care with providers is important to make sure that patients get appropriate referrals and that data tracking takes place for each patient, he said. Ten health systems and 50 care managers to date have been integrated into the program.

No program will work unless you measure the outcomes and promote results, Mr. Sory said. This involves measuring clinical changes such as asthma severity or blood pressure scores, as well as tracking the satisfaction of physicians and patients. "Are patients using the emergency room less, and is this lowering the overall health system costs?" These are the outcomes a successful program has to track, he said.

Among the improvements in patient behavior, 39% of patients have increased their compliance with medication regimens prescribed, 19% of patients have reported following a special diet, and 52%

improved physical health scores. "We're beginning to see blood pressure scores improving because of the way patients are beginning to use care managers," he said.

There has been a 99% increase in the number of patients who monitor their peak airflow at home and a 72% reduction in diabetes patients who fail to check their feet. Mr. Sory said more than 240,000 lancets have been distributed to monitor blood glucose at home. In addition, thousands of blood pressure monitors have been distributed to patients with hypertension, as well as 3,700 peak flow meters to asthma patients.

Mr. Sory gave the example of one patient, a recent immigrant, who was legally blind, had asthma, and was taking multiple medications. The problem is "he didn't understand his disease," Mr. Sory said.

Under the program, a caregiver drives out to visit him and instructs him on using his medications, such as putting one rubber band on the medicine he takes once a day, and three on the medicines he takes three times daily.

In addition, the caregiver told him what environmental triggers for his asthma might send him to the emergency department, and found a physician for him.

Such changes have an impact on the number of hospital visits and also reduce costs, Mr. Sory said.

Pfizer sponsored the interactive Webcast for the meeting. ■

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PRODUCTS

Oral Medication Dispenser

The design of the Exacta-Med dispenser prevents the attachment of a luer needle hub or a needleless connector, to help eliminate potential error from wrong-route oral liquid medication administration. For more information, contact Baxa Corp. by visiting www.baxa.com.

Service Allows Access to Device Data

The Food and Drug Administration has approved a novel service that provides access to clinical information from an implanted Medtronic device. CardioSight is designed for use by physicians who care for heart failure patients with such a device but who did not implant it. For more information, contact Medtronic by visiting www.medtronic.com/physician/cardiosight.

New Supplement for Joint Health

CH-Alpha joint health supplement contains 10 g collagen hydrolysate and may improve joint function, strength, and mobility. The supplement comes in monthly packs of 30 ready-to-drink vials, retailing for \$60. For more information, contact GELITA Health Products U.S. Inc., by visiting www.ch-alpha.us or by calling 866-424-2574.

Chlamydia and Gonorrhea Tests

Liquid pap specimens collected and processed with the Cytoc Corp. ThinPrep system can now be used with the Gen-Probe Inc. APTIMA Combo 2 assay to test

for *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. For more information, contact Gen-Probe Inc. by calling 800-523-5001 (option 1) 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PST or by sending an e-mail to customerservice@gen-probe.com.

Rapid Heart Failure Test

The Food and Drug Administration has granted a Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) waiver for the Triage BNP test. The rapid immunoassay tests blood for the presence of B-type natriuretic peptide (BNP), which can be used to diagnose heart failure and assess severity. The 15-minute assay involves placing a few drops of the patient's blood on a disposable test device, which is then inserted into the Triage meter. For more information, contact Biosite Inc. by visiting www.biosite.com or by calling 888-246-7483.

Clonazepam Disintegrating Tablets

Clonazepam orally disintegrating tablets (0.125 mg, 0.25 mg, 0.5 mg, 1 mg, and 2 mg) have been approved, alone or as an adjunct, for treatment of Lennox-Gastaut syndrome (petit mal variant), akinetic and myoclonic seizures, and for the treatment of panic disorder, with or without agoraphobia as defined in DSM-IV. For more information, contact Barr Pharmaceuticals Inc. by visiting www.barrlabs.com or by calling 800-222-4043.

New Indication for Diovan

Diovan (valsartan) is now approved to reduce the risk of cardiovascular death in patients with left ventricular failure or dysfunction following myocardial infarction. The drug's heart failure labeling also has been expanded to include use in the treatment of a broader range of heart failure patients. The drug is no longer limited to those intolerant of angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors. For more information, contact Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp. by visiting www.diovan.com or by calling 888-669-6682.

Updated Label for ParaGard IUD

The label for ParaGard T 380A intrauterine copper contraceptive includes new prescribing information. Nulliparity or a history of sexually transmitted diseases is no longer a contraindication, nor is pelvic inflammatory disease unless a patient currently has acute disease or engages in sexual behavior suggesting a high risk for the disease. For more information, visit www.paragard.com.

Expanded Labeling for Pap Test

The ThinPrep pap test label now includes the detection of endocervical and endometrial glandular lesions. For more information, contact Cytoc Corp. by visiting www.cytoc.com or by calling 800-442-9892.

Extended-Release Pain Relief

Tramadol HCl extended-release tablets are approved for the management of moderate to moderately severe chronic

pain in adults who require around-the-clock treatment of pain for an extended period of time. For more information, contact Biovail Pharmaceuticals Inc. by visiting www.biovail.com or by calling 908-927-1400.

SelectSecure Lead System Approved

The SelectSecure pacing lead (model 3830) is approved for use with pacemakers, implantable cardioverter-defibrillators, and cardiac resynchronization therapy devices. The lead has a lumenless design that allows for flexibility and a smaller body size while maintaining insulation thickness. For more information, contact Medtronic Inc. by calling 800-328-2518 or 800-328-2518.

Frozen Premixed Ceftriaxone

Ceftriaxone injection is now packaged in single-dose plastic containers. The premixed frozen drug is ready to use. Ceftriaxone is indicated for the treatment of susceptible bacterial infections in the lung, skin, abdomen, genitourinary tract, ear, blood, CNS, bone, and joints. For more information, contact Baxter Healthcare Corp. by calling 800-422-9837 or 847-948-4770.

Mobic for Tx of Juvenile RA

Mobic (meloxicam) tablets and oral suspension have been approved for the relief of the signs and symptoms of pauciarticular or polyarticular course juvenile rheumatoid arthritis in patients age 2 years and older. For more information, contact Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals Inc. by calling 800-243-0127 or 203-798-9988.