

Healthy Aging Medicare Stop Smoking Program

A research demonstration project funded through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Background: Cigarette smoking is the single most preventable cause of morbidity and mortality in the United States and has been recognized as a significant health risk factor among the elderly population. Treating smoking-related illnesses has been estimated to cost Medicare \$800 billion between 1995 and 2015. There is evidence demonstrating significant benefits to smoking cessation in the elderly, even after decades of regular smoking. Despite the extensive evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of smoking cessation interventions, Medicare does not currently cover smoking cessation counseling or pharmacotherapy.

Methods: The *Medicare Stop Smoking Program* is a research demonstration project funded through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to test the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of three variations of a Medicare smoking cessation benefit against usual care. The three benefits being tested are: provider counseling reimbursement only; provider counseling reimbursement with pharmacotherapy coverage (the nicotine patch or Zyban[®]); and a telephone counseling quitline with pharmacotherapy coverage (the nicotine patch). Enrollees in the usual care arm will receive smoking cessation information. The study design used to test these benefits in this project is a comparison trial with restricted randomization of 43,500 Medicare beneficiaries age ≥ 65 years in seven states. States are divided into four regions corresponding with the four intervention arms. Enrollees are assigned to interventions based on where they live.

Subjects are recruited via standardized community outreach and media outlets in the seven study states. Beneficiaries **voluntarily** call the enrollment center to learn more about the program. The enrollment call center provides study information, screens potential enrollees for eligibility and performs a telephone-administered registration survey after a beneficiary meets eligibility criteria. Eligibility criteria include: Medicare beneficiary (fee-for service with Part B coverage), age greater than or equal to 65 years, current smoker, interest in trying to quit smoking, and anticipated residence in the designated study locale for at least nine months. In addition, beneficiaries living in either of the provider counseling arms must name the provider they plan to see, who must also be located in the regions of the state assigned to provider counseling.

Providers are notified when their patient enrolls in the program and receive a packet of information outlining the project, its limitations, and special claims processing procedures. The Medicare Stop Smoking Program uses a special system to process claims. Providers submit smoking cessation counseling claims using a form developed just for this project and send them to TrailBlazer Health Enterprises for processing. Providers are reimbursed at a rate of \$36.98 for smoking cessation counseling services.

Study Setting: The *Medicare Stop Smoking Program* demonstration will be conducted in the following seven states: Alabama, Florida, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Ohio and Wyoming.

Outcomes: Efficacy of the intervention arms will be evaluated via repeat six and 12-month surveys that will assess current smoking status, as well as quit attempts. The trial's results, anticipated in 2005, will be used to design a potential new Medicare smoking cessation benefit.

**For questions regarding claims, please call
TrailBlazer Health Enterprises
at 1-866-65BEGIN (1-866-652-3446)**

**For questions regarding the study design or project background information, please contact
Carrie Larson, MSSP Enrollment Coordinator, at (860) 613-4184.**

