

CMS Announces Proposed Dialysis Payment Rates for 2021

On July 6, 2020, CMS announced proposed payment rates and payment policy changes for dialysis services for 2021. CMS anticipates that the overall impact of the rate changes will be a 1.6% increase in Medicare payments for dialysis services.

The most significant provisions of interest to the transplant community are those that may encourage the use of home dialysis, a renal replacement treatment option that is often clinically appropriate for ESRD patients who are also good candidates for kidney transplantation. Specifically, under the 2021 ESRD Proposed Rule, home dialysis machines suitable for use by a single patient will be eligible for transitional add-on payment for new and innovative equipment and supplies (“TPNIES”). Payment would be made at 65% of an amount determined by the Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) for the area and would be made for a two-year period.

CMS is proposing to retain one transplant-related quality measure in the ESRD Quality Improvement Program (QIP) for the 2021 performance year/2023 payment year. Specifically, CMS is proposing to retain the clinical measure, Percentage of Prevalent Patients Waitlisted (PPPW) (Percentage of patients at each dialysis facility who were on the kidney or kidney-pancreas transplant waitlist averaged across patients prevalent on the last day of each month during the performance period). The Proposed Rule indicates that, based on 2018 data, the median score on this measure was 16.73%, meaning that, on average (median), approximately 17% of dialysis facility patients are waitlisted.