



## Benefits Improvement and Protection Act of 2000

A physician's six-month prognosis certification is still required for admission of a terminally ill person to hospice. However, the Benefits Improvement and Protection Act of 2000 clarifies and emphasizes that **a referring physician's certification is based upon "best clinical judgment."**

This is a powerful message. **It assures physicians that certainty of prognosis is not expected.**

Indeed, the Medicare Hospice Benefit was structured to allow flexibility and "best clinical judgment." A terminally ill patient must "elect", or choose, hospice care. Election periods consist of two 90-day periods (six months), followed by unlimited 60-day election periods. Therefore, the patient may be cared for by hospice even longer than six months, if, in the physician's "best clinical judgment" at the beginning of each election period, the patient has a limited life expectancy if the disease follows an expected course.