



TO: Boulder and Broomfield County Physicians
FROM: George Stark, MD & Felicia Stonedale, MD,
Medical Directors
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**CMS TO INTERMEDIARIES/CARRIERS: EDUCATE
ABOUT HOSPICE**

The Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) released a program memorandum on March 28 as a cover to an article aimed at educating providers about hospice and CMS rules for end-of-life coverage under the Medicare hospice benefit.

Physicians are advised that they do not need to be concerned about CMS penalties related to such certifications and that CMS “is aware that terminal illness does not always have a predictable course and can be extended beyond the initial six month certification.” The memo urges healthcare providers, including physicians, hospitals, and skilled nursing facilities to recommend hospice care if they deem it appropriate.

The article is entitled “Hospice Care Enhances Dignity and Peace as Life Nears Its End.” Hospice can, the article notes, ease much of “the pain and sense of hopelessness that may accompany terminal illness.” CMS cites the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Care Medicine’s objective to “bring the hospice approach into mainstream medicine and eliminate the dichotomy whereby patients receive either curative or palliative care.”

In conclusion, the article says, “Hospice is not about death, but rather about the quality of life as it nears its end, for all concerned – the patient, family and friends, and the health professional community.” The full article can be read online or downloaded from www.cms.hhs.gov/manuals/pm_trans/AB03040.pdf. (*Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Website, 3/28*)

Please call us at HospiceCare of Boulder and Broomfield Counties, **303-449-7740**, should you have a referral or want to discuss a particular individual’s appropriateness for hospice care.