



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Compendia of Care

What are the Compendia of Care?

Compendia of Care refer to reference sources for cancer treatment that include a summary of how each cancer drug works in the body, as well as information for health care practitioners about proper dosing and whether the drug is recommended or endorsed for use in treating a specific disease. In some cases, the compendia may recommend uses beyond those included in the FDA-approved labels for a drug (known as “off-label” use).

The Medicare contractors, who process and pay Medicare claims and approve coverage for drugs under Medicare Part B, use the compendia, among several other tools, to determine whether an anti-cancer drug may be covered under Medicare Part B. To ensure that Medicare contractors continue to have access to up-to-date drug compendia to make coverage decisions, CMS established a process to revise its recognized compendia list, including recommendations from CMS' Medicare Evidence Development & Coverage Advisory Committee (MedCAC), on the factors the Agency should consider when updating the list of compendia. The MedCAC recommendations identified criteria that a compendium should meet before Medicare includes it as a drug reference guide. The recommendations included a transparent process for evaluating therapies and a process for public identification and notification of potential conflicts of interest of the compendia's parent and sibling organizations, reviewers, and committee members. CMS' compendia-revising process also includes a 30-day public comment period.

Four Compendia Available

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology™ – the recognized standard for clinical policy in oncology – are the most comprehensive and most frequently updated cancer clinical practice guidelines. Covering 97 percent of all patients with cancer and updated on a continual basis, the NCCN Guidelines are developed through an explicit review of the evidence integrated with expert medical judgment by multidisciplinary panels from NCCN member institutions. The NCCN compendium is offered through a paid subscription of \$499 per year.

In addition to the NCCN compendium, there are three other published versions that are recognized by CMS:

- Thomson Micromedex DrugDex®
- Clinical Pharmacology
- American Hospital Formulary Service-Drug Information

The four compendia do not agree on what are recommended off-label uses of a drug, nor is it common, or cost-feasible for practices to subscribe to all four versions. The companies contracted to process Medicare claims do not commonly subscribe to all four versions. Yet for an

off-label use to be approved for re-imburement, it must be mentioned in all four compendia. Therefore, it falls to a practice to consult four separate sources before recommending treatment and submitting a claim to CMS. Then in order to process that claim, the CMS facility must consult references it may not have access to.

Role of Community Oncology Alliance

COA is working with other cancer professional organizations to determine an appropriate way to deal with the compendia of care and the complexities of off-label use of drugs for cancer treatment. COA anticipates that in the second half of 2009, these organizations will issue a joint statement addressing the problems associated with the compendia and make recommendations for solutions.