



American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association

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Breaking News

November 17, 2015

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Upcoming Events

RAC Contractors Have Been Authorized to Re-Start Audit Activity

It has been remarkably quiet on the Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) front for the last 18 months or so. As a result of the original RAC contracts coming to an end and new RAC contract proposals being submitted and reviewed, the number of additional documentation requests (ADRs) has been reduced significantly. CMS advised its original RAC contractors to essentially hold off on issuing new ADRs until new contracts were finalized and implemented. One of these new contracts would establish a single, national RAC contractor who would be responsible for RAC audits on all Medicare DMEPOS, Home Health, and Hospice claims. This contract was initially awarded to Connolly Healthcare who currently serves as the Jurisdiction C RAC contractor for all Medicare claims. While the contract award was issued in December 2014, a subsequent protest of the award initially delayed its implementation and eventually led to a CMS decision to issue new bids for all of the RAC contracts, including the national contract for DMEPOS, Home Health, and Hospice claims.

On November 16, 2015, CMS announced that while new bids for RAC contracts are being accepted and reviewed, the existing four RACs may continue to perform RAC reviews and may begin to issue additional ADR requests. This signals an effective end to the moratorium that was placed on new RAC activity in February of 2014. While it may take a few weeks for the current RACs to put in place the resources to re-start full scale activities, there is no reason to expect that they will not do so as soon as possible.

While this announcement is not an encouraging development, RAC audits are not new to the O&P community and hopefully we have learned some lessons from previous experiences with

RAC auditors. When RAC audits began several years ago, O&P providers faced a new reality as far as what documentation was expected in order for claims to be paid and stay paid. Hopefully this education has not been forgotten as a result of the slowdown in RAC audits and the impact of the RACs becoming more active will be significantly lower.

RAC audits for O&P providers are still limited to a maximum of 10 audits per Tax ID every 45 days. AOPA encourages everyone to make sure you are aware of these limits and to challenge any requests that exceed the limits. While nobody is happy to hear that the RACs are back in business, at least temporarily, the lessons of the past should make for a less stressful future. The CMS announcement regarding RAC audits may be found on [the CMS website](#).

Questions regarding this issue may be directed to Joe McTernan at jmcternan@aopanet.org or Devon Bernard at dbernard@aopanet.org.

<p style="text-align: center;">CMS Implements Final Rule on Comprehensive Care for Joint Replacement, Which Provides Incentive Payments to Hospitals to Reduce Volume of Services/Total Costs</p>
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On November 16, 2015, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a final rule entitled, “*Medicare Program; Comprehensive Care for Joint Replacement Payment Model for Acute Care Hospitals Furnishing Lower Extremity Joint Replacement Services*.” This final rule represents CMS action under its Innovation Center to initiative its first foray into implementing post-acute care bundling (the objection by AOPA and others that Congress has never authorized CMS to invoke post-acute care bundling was skirted by CMS—[click here to read AOPA’s comments](#)). The rule establishes a mandatory Medicare payment policy demonstration that will apply for hospital inpatient, outpatient, post-acute, and physician services rendered in connection certain Total Hip Arthroplasty (THA), Total Knee Arthroplasty (TKA), and select other lower extremity surgeries for the duration of the inpatient stay and 90 days following hospital discharge.

This policy would apply to hospitals in 67 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), beginning on April 1, 2016 and lasting through December 31, 2020. The Proposed Rule had called for application in 75 MSAs and a start date of January 1, 2016, representing two of the most significant changes CMS made in the Final Rule.

Hospitals, physicians, and post-acute care providers would continue to bill and be reimbursed through Medicare Fee-for-Service (FFS), under their respective payment systems, for the duration of the CJR demonstration.

However, total Medicare Part A and Part B spending for services provided during the 90-day window would be reconciled against hospital-specific target expenditure amounts that are derived from a blend of hospital-specific and regional historical Medicare Part A and B payments for CJR episodes, transitioning from primarily provider-specific to completely regional pricing over the course of the 5 performance years.

For Year 2 through 5, after reconciling actual spending with the target prices, hospitals (and any providers with which the hospital has entered into a joint risk-sharing contractual arrangement for the CJR Model) would be required to repay the excess costs above the target price up to certain “Stop-Loss Limits” that would vary by year, *e.g.* 5% Stop-Loss Limit in Year 2. There would be no repayment obligation for excess costs in Year 1 of the program. Similarly, hospitals and their risk-sharing contractual partners that achieve actual episode spending below the target

price (and meet quality performance thresholds on required quality measures) would be eligible to earn a reconciliation payment for the difference between the target price and actual episode spending, up to the Stop-Gain Limit.

CMS Finalizes Stark Law Changes in CY 2016 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule

This past July, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a proposed rule that, in many ways, signaled the agency's intent to ease the burden of complying with the law. On October 30, 2015, CMS unveiled its final changes in this iteration of Stark Law rulemaking as part of the CY 2016 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule final rule (the "Final Rule"). The Final Rule makes several significant changes, including new exceptions for the recruitment of nonphysician practitioners and timeshare arrangements.

The regulatory changes will become effective January 1, 2016, with the exception of the changes related to determining the level of physician ownership in physician-owned hospitals, which will take effect January 1, 2017.

While AOPA does not foresee a significant impact of the new Stark law changes to O&P, here are the area of new exceptions: Nonphysician Practitioner Compensation Assistance; Timeshare Arrangements.

The Final Rule includes clarifications for Physician-owned Hospitals; (a. Clarification of Ownership Disclosure Requirements; b. Modification of Definition of Physician Ownership or Investment.) The Final Rule revised procedural requirements including recruitment and retention changes, and an update to the language for retention payment in underserved areas. [Read the complete updates here.](#)

Read the November Issue of the O&P Almanac Online



Improving With Age | Page 20

AOPA's annual Wine Tasting and Auction has become a true 'experience.' [Read More](#)

Cover Story: Foot Care for the Ages | Page 22

Great awareness of early intervention for pediatric flatfoot and other issues will prevent complications for patients later in life. [Read More](#)

Leadership Series: Broadening Our Scope | Page 30

Providing ancillary services may offer benefits for both O&P facilities and patients. [Read More](#)

[Page 18](#) – Reimbursement Page – Earn 2 CE's
[Read the Column and Take Your Quiz Here.](#)

OPAF Welcomes New Board Members and Officers

OPAF & The First Clinics welcome three new board members and new officers, effective December 1. Joining the OPAF Board of Directors will be Lesleigh Sisson, CFom, Nikki Hooks, CO and Mary Gangelhoff. The OPAF officer slate will include Sue Borondy as President, Karen Henry as Vice President and Reggie Showers as Treasurer.

Lesleigh Sisson is the owner of O & P Insight in Las Vegas, NV and has years of experience working with the administrative side of orthotic & prosthetic practices. Lesleigh helps independent O&P practices to not only survive but also to thrive in today's challenging and ever-changing healthcare environment with its demands for efficient work flow and successful compliance. Nikki Hooks, CO is part of the professional staff at Ability Prosthetics and Orthotics in the Greenville, SC location. Nikki was instrumental in the development and promotion of OPAF's First Cycle clinics. Mary Gangelhoff is an area manager of prosthetics with Ossur Americas in Minneapolis. "To enable individuals to improve their quality of life through the programs offered through OPAF will be a privilege to be part of" said Mary.

The Amputee Coalition Host Webinar for National Diabetes Month

With November being National Diabetes Month, the Amputee Coalition invites you to attend this important Webinar to learn about what makes a diabetic or a person with circulatory problems more at risk for limb loss, how to recognize a problem that is emerging and when to contact your doctor, what a patient should be doing on a regular basis to prevent limb loss (necessary foot care, checking feet, checking residual limb for sores etc.), and discussion about VA's system of care for limb loss prevention and what a person at risk for limb loss can expect from the VA system.

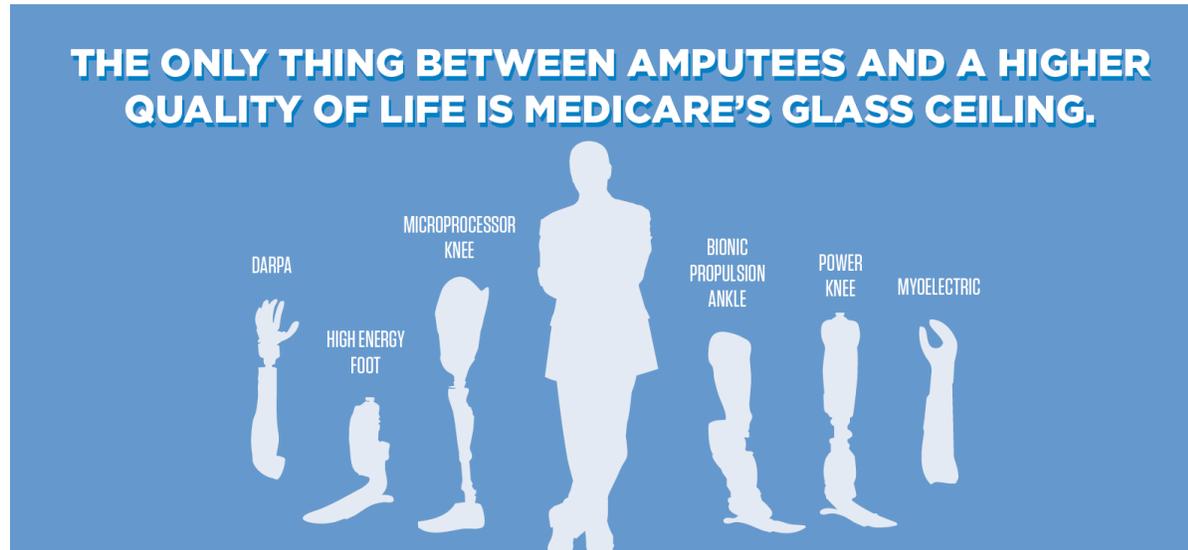


This presentation will last approximately 40 minutes, with a 20-minute Q&A session following the presentation. If you are not able to attend the Webinar on **Monday, November 23, 2015 at 1:30pm EST**, it will be posted on our Web site after the conclusion.

[Register now!](#)

Share AOPA's Ad on the "Prosthetic Glass Ceiling"

Consider sharing AOPA's print ad on your website that appeared in the *Washington Post* and *The Hill*. For more information, [click here](#).



Medicare's glass ceiling moves today's prosthetic devices out of reach for most amputees.

Decades of technological advancements mean that new levels of mobility, health and independence are possible for amputees. The only problem? Medicare. The federal government makes it highly unlikely that a patient will qualify for these devices, **and new regulations will make the situation worse, not better.**

If Medicare is trying to save money, denying amputees prosthetic devices isn't the way to do it. A new study shows patients who receive timely prosthetic and orthotic devices can actually save Medicare money over patients who are not treated — more than \$231 million was saved for Medicare in 2014 alone.

Amputees Who Receive Better Prostheses Save Medicare Money*

K3 Prostheses (Higher Quality) \$79,967

K2 Prostheses (Lesser Quality) \$81,513

FIRST 12 MONTHS, ALL HEALTH COSTS.

Who has fewer incidents that require expensive care? In most cases, it is the amputees who have been given the prosthetics that kept them active and healthy. And now Medicare and its contractors are planning to further restrict who can get these better prosthetic limbs.

Though new, higher quality custom prostheses are widely available, Medicare restrictions are a glass ceiling that keeps them out of reach of most amputees. Even though it's been shown these devices provide a better quality of life.



10.3% fewer skilled nursing claims for people with high-quality prostheses

It's an outrage that Medicare would deny amputees the life-changing mobility that comes with prosthetics.

To learn more about the Medicare study and what you can do to stop these policies, visit mobilitysaves.org.



Who Had Fewer Medical Incidents?	Received Higher Quality Prosthetics	Received Lower Quality Prosthetics
Fewer E.R. Admissions?	✓	
Fewer Skilled Nursing Needs?	✓	
Fewer Doctor Visits?	✓	
Fewer Hospice Admissions?	✓	



* Dobson | DaVanzo analysis of custom cohort Standard Analytic Files (2007-2010) for Medicare beneficiaries who received O&P services from January 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009 (and matched comparisons), according to custom cohort database definition.



AOPA Debuts the New AOPAversity

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Upcoming AOPA Events

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| December 9, 2015 | <i>Bringing in the New Year: New Codes and Changes for 2016</i>
AOPA Webinar
Learn more or register here |
| January 2016 | Mastering Medicare: Essential Coding & Billing Techniques Seminar
Tampa, FL |
| January 13 2016 | <i>Pre-Payment Reviews: What You Need to Know to Pass</i>
AOPA Webinar
Learn more or register here |