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Contact:
Marie Watteau, AHA, (202) 626-2351
Carolyn Zollar, AMPRA, (202) 223-1920
Richard Coorsh, FAH (202) 624-1527

New Report Confirms Declining Utilization and Increasing Acuity of Inpatient Rehabilitation Hospital Services Provided to Seniors

Washington, DC – A new report documents sustained declines in patients discharged from inpatient rehabilitation hospitals as well as an increase in higher acuity patients following the implementation of several major policy changes in recent years. Coupled with other data demonstrating stable Medicare spending on IRFs since 2001 and the high quality care they provide, this study reinforces the unique value of IRFs in the continuum of care. The updated report by The Moran Company for the American Hospital Association, American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association, and the Federation of American Hospitals, confirms that the number of Medicare beneficiaries utilizing IRF services dropped by 26% since 2004.

“Rehabilitation hospitals deliver high quality care and provide unique clinical value for patients who require hospital-level care and intensive rehabilitation after an illness, injury or surgery,” said Rich Umbdenstock, President and CEO of the American Hospital Association. “Any further payment reductions would inappropriately reduce patients’ ability to access these important services.”

“More Medicare beneficiaries need vital inpatient rehabilitation services, yet the report illustrates that fewer beneficiaries are actually receiving them. This paradox illustrates the harmful consequence of further cuts to IRF payments and other policies that would limit seniors’ access to IRF care,” remarked Chip Kahn, President and CEO of the Federation of American Hospitals.

“The report observes that the clinical severity of patients treated in inpatient rehabilitation hospitals and units has increased over time, with an increase of more functionally impaired, medically complex patients with conditions such as joint replacements and hip fractures,” said AMRPA – Chairman Bruce M. Gans, M.D.

The report finds that the decline in patient volume is due to policy changes pertaining to the IRF 60% Rule and comprehensive refinements in 2010 to IRF patient coverage criteria and admissions policies.

Today's report serves as a significant reminder of the unique value provided by inpatient rehabilitation hospitals and units at a time when further payment reductions are being considered.

To view the report go to www.aha.org/irfreport.

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