

Date: December 10, 2020

To: Genesis Rehab Services Business Partners

From: Lou Ann Soika, Chief Strategy and Administrative Officer

Re: Business Partner Communication - Week of December 6, 2020

Time Sensitive - Advocacy Needed -Please Take Action Today!

Genesis Rehab, along with the National Association for the Support of Long Term Care (NASL) and a group of nearly 40 other medical specialty provider groups, stands strongly in opposition to the significant 2021 payment reductions for services for nursing facility patients finalized by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in the CY 2021 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, which are effective for January 1, 2021. Now, during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, is the absolute wrong time to cut services we provide to our vulnerable nursing facility patients.

On Tuesday, December 1st, CMS released its CY 2021 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule [Final Rule](#) and associated [Fact Sheet](#), which establishes payment rates and other provisions related to Medicare Part B services. This Final Rule reflects CMS' goal to significantly increase funding to primary and chronic care providers that bill Evaluation and Management (E/M) CPT codes. The increase in those E/M codes forces an offsetting cut in other specialties to offset the E/M increase. This will result in significant cuts to many other providers including those who provide services to nursing facility patients. Specifically, **CMS has finalized a 9% cut to outpatient physical and occupational therapy services; speech-language pathology is cut 6%; x-ray services are cut 6%; as well as social workers, dieticians, and physician and nurse practitioners furnishing services in nursing facilities, are all receiving cuts.**

We are engaged in advocacy with NASL and other health care provider organizations in Washington, DC, to ask Congress to stop these drastic cuts because our nursing facilities are heavily burdened with the impact of COVID-19 and cannot absorb these cuts. **You can take action to fight this and we encourage you to [contact your U.S. Senators](#) to urge them to include legislation in any year-end 2020 legislative package to prevent these potentially devastating cuts from taking effect on January 1, 2021, in order to protect patient access to medically necessary services.**

Also, we also urge you to [contact your member of the U.S. House of Representatives](#) to ask them to stop the Medicare cuts to providers and support the enactment of the *Holding Providers Harmless from Medicare Cuts During COVID-10 Act of 2020 (H.R. 8702)*. This bipartisan legislation would ensure that payments to these negatively providers – including rehabilitation therapists, portable x-ray providers, and nurse practitioners – are kept stable at 2020 rates for the next two years.

Genesis Overview of COVID Vaccines

We have been working on logistics as to how we can best collaborate with our Business Partners to ensure that our staff have access to the COVID vaccine. Many of you have already reached out to let us know that you will be including our staff in your vaccination process by offering it to the therapy team and adding our staff members into your facility counts in your CVS, Walgreens, etc. orders. Thank you! We believe that is a best practice and Genesis Rehab will be happy to collaborate with you. We want to be 100% ready since we know the vaccine, once approved, may become available to us as early as next week.

If you want our staff to be included in your Covid vaccine initiative, please reach out to your local Genesis Rehab team member to let them know, if possible, what pharmacy (CVS, Walgreens, etc.) and what dates the pharmacy will be on site to provide the vaccinations. From there, we will support by assisting with:

- Education for our Director of Rehab and therapy team on what to expect.
 - We will reinforce that they will need to provide their insurance cards and fill out a consent.
 - We will further reinforce that the consent is needed by the pharmacy and likely in advance
- Our Director or Rehab will be able to provide a headcount of therapy team members so that you may include this in your pharmacy requests.

While there is no actual data, based on Genesis discussions with the CDC and other world wide agencies, we believe the following is the most accurate information to date. Guidance and information changes rapidly so we encourage you to seek counsel with your HR, legal and medical experts.

- There are currently two different vaccines that have been submitted for emergency use authorization (EUA) and they are both reportedly very effective. Because of the immune system response to these very effective vaccines, people may have side effects within the first 24-36 hours of each shot which may include fever, muscle aches, headaches, and/or fatigue.
- We expect negative reactions to the vaccine to be minimal but we do have a team of over 5,000+ PRN therapists that we can call on in the event of a therapist being absent as we do today.

As we receive additional information, we'll be sure to communicate with you. For your use and reference, we have included a QA COVID-19 Vaccine document from AMDA that has been shared with our staff.

Regulatory Updates and Resources:

[HHS will distribute \\$523 million in the second round of performance payments](#)

- Round 2 of additional Provider Relief Fund payments will be distributed to over 9,000 nursing homes.

- These nursing homes are being rewarded for successfully reducing COVID-19 related infections and deaths between September and October.
- Recipients may use this funding to acquire additional personal protective equipment or other efforts to help slow the spread of COVID-19.
- The state-by-state breakdown of the funding is available [here](#) and the facility-level of first-round nursing home incentive payment recipients is available [here](#)

[12/4/20 Memo from the Director of Quality Safety and Oversight Group](#)

- CMS will resume calculating nursing homes Health Inspection and Quality Measure ratings on January 27, 2021
 - Findings from the focused infection control inspections will be used to calculate each nursing home's inspection rating in the way findings from complaint inspections are used in the Five Star Quality Rating System.
 - More details will be posted by January 15, 2021 in the [Five Star Technical Users' Guide](#).
- CMS is completing its transition to the new [Care Compare](#) website which is a streamlined redesign of eight existing CMS healthcare compare tools

Additional Information:

Please see attached for our GRS “Your Wellness Matters” recorded video library and the December edition of our Wellness Tips newsletter. Be sure to check out our new wellness classes:

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Engage in this mind-body technique that involves slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group in the body.

Flexibility with Physical Therapist Cindy Gallo

Join us for a class designed to increase relaxation and flexibility.

Chair Yoga with Physical Therapist Kelly Repka

Mind and body balance is essential. It can help prevent falls, decrease pain, reduce anxiety, and help improve flexibility and strength. Join in as we engage in the mind and body connection through yoga.

Affirmations with Speech-Language Pathologist Delle Crowe

Discussion on topics such as gratitude and love.

Functional Strength with Physical Therapist Michael McGregor

Have fun and move through a variety of seated exercises designed to increase muscular strength, range of movement, and activities for daily living.

Maximize your Memory with Speech-Language Pathologist Bobby Maxwell

Interactive brain health classes to support your cognitive wellness!

Meditation and Mindfulness with Speech-Language Pathologist Jordan Bowman

Enjoy guided meditation including gentle stretching and mindfulness practices.

Tai Chi (Seated Modification) with Physical Therapist Jen Lucas

Engage in this gentle exercise while seated. Exercise consists of slow, graceful movements combined with deep breathing.

Celebrating Safely



The COVID-19 pandemic has been [stressful](#) and isolating for many people. Gatherings during the upcoming holidays can be an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends. This holiday season, consider how your holiday plans can be modified to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to keep your friends, families, and communities healthy and safe. Celebrating virtually or with members of your own household (who are consistently taking [measures](#) to reduce the spread of COVID-19) poses the lowest risk for spread.

Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>

Examples of how households may differ:

- ★ Family members sharing a home
- ★ Roommates in a private residence or in a community residence
- ★ Community members sharing common spaces
- ★ Private caregiver living in your home



What can you do to stay healthy and safe?

- ★ Prioritize attending outdoor activities if weather permits
- ★ Use social distancing and limit physical contact
- ★ Wear a mask
- ★ Limit contact with commonly touched surfaces or shared items
- ★ Ensure commonly touched surfaces are clean and disinfected
- ★ Bring supplies to help you stay healthy (hand sanitizer, water)
- ★ Avoid self-serve food options such as buffets and potlucks
- ★ Use grab and go meal options if available
- ★ Communicate to others the importance of wearing a mask

We recommend you engage in physically and/or intellectually stimulating activities on a regular basis to enhance your overall wellness. Please join us for recorded GRS Your Wellness Matters Classes.

The wellness classes can be accessed by [Clicking Here](#).



Contact your local Genesis Rehab Services therapy team onsite
Corporate Office: 101 E. State Street, Kennett Square, PA 19348 • genesisrehab.com



Welcome to our **GRS Your Wellness Matters Recorded mind-body-cognitive wellness class series** presented by our expert Clinical Director Instructors. You can access our wellness classes any time, any day, from the comfort of your own home.

Location: [Click Here](#) for access to our class library

Duration: Class durations range from 18 - 35 minutes

Class Descriptions: see below

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Questions and Answers about the COVID-19 Vaccine for PALTC Staff, Patients, Residents and Family Members

December 1, 2020

1. How is a vaccine developed and tested?

- Approval of a vaccine for use in people involves multiple phases with different goals for assessing effectiveness and safety in different populations. There are a total of 4 phases and the vaccine must meet very intense safety criteria before completing each phase. Once a vaccine is approved for use after phase 3, it has been tested in tens of thousands of people and if no significant harmful side effects are noted, it is considered safe for use. Phase 4 involves continued monitoring and gathering of safety data. This type of clinical trial has been used for decades to approve medications and vaccines.

2. What are the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requirements for the safety and efficacy of a COVID-19 vaccine?

- FDA requires 50% efficacy of a COVID-19 vaccine (the COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna are showing 94-95% efficacy in preventing COVID-19 disease during this trial phase). Many other companies are working on a vaccine and we expect that others will be approved by the FDA.
- FDA requires 8 weeks of safety data on the COVID-19 vaccine.

3. How will we know it is safe?

- Safety is the most important requirement for the vaccine and is assessed in trials by independent experts.
- Most adverse side effects occur within 6 weeks of vaccine administration, and the FDA has required 8 weeks of safety monitoring so it can track any side effects.
- FDA advises a minimum of 3,000 participants to assess safety. The current phase 3 trials have 30,000 to 50,000 participants. This really demonstrates how safety is a top priority for the FDA and the medical community.

4. Who else will be evaluating this vaccine to ensure it is safe and effective?

- There are 2 advisory committees: (1) The Vaccine and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) that advises the FDA; (2) The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) that advises the CDC.
- These advisory boards are independent. Their job is to monitor vaccines to ensure safety regardless of money, politics, etc.
- The people on these committees are experts from academic institutions and they are vetted to avoid a conflict of interest. Experts who may have a conflict of interest are not put on these committees.
- The committees will evaluate the vaccine data for safety and efficacy, and also help to determine how it will be distributed.

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5. What are the types of potential vaccines that may be approved?

- Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines are a new type of vaccine undergoing clinical trials (*see question #6 below for more information on this*). There are also other types vaccines being studied that are similar to vaccines we have used for other diseases. **None of these can give you COVID-19!** The goal is to give your body the tools it needs to fight COVID-19 effectively and/or prevent you from getting it at all.
- Also, **none of the proposed vaccines contain live or killed viral particles**, even though some other effective vaccines for other diseases have (*see question #6 below for more information on how these new vaccines work*).
- Most of the vaccines that are currently being tested will require 2 doses to be effective, given about 3-4 weeks apart.
- This is to make sure your body has enough antibodies to fight COVID-19. Getting 2 doses within 3-4 weeks has been shown to be safe and there are other vaccines we have been using for years that require multiple doses without causing harm.

6. How does an mRNA vaccine work?

- According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website, mRNA vaccines contain material from the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19. This material gives our cells instructions for how to make a harmless protein that is unique to the virus. This protein cannot build a virus or cause infection. After our cells make copies of the protein, they destroy the genetic material from the vaccine. Our bodies recognize that the protein should not be there and build antibodies that will remember how to fight the virus that causes COVID-19 if we are infected in the future.
- While mRNA technology is new in vaccine development, this technology is being successfully used in cancer treatments.
- For more information, visit the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines/how-they-work.html>

7. What is an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) and if the vaccine is approved for an EUA, what does that mean?

- An EUA is based on the need to use a vaccine quickly to save lives during an urgent health crisis.
- You may be anxious about the speed with which a vaccine has been approved. While the EUA is a shorter process, no steps are skipped in the safety evaluation process.
- This approval can still take weeks and the FDA will re-evaluate the numbers and data to ensure that the calculations are correct.
- The FDA will assess if the vaccine's known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks.
- Both advisory boards (VRBPAC and ACIP) will also review all the data and information.

8. How long will the vaccine protect us?

- It is likely that we will not know the answer to that question when a vaccine is released. That will take more research.

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- This vaccine may be like the annual flu vaccine, where we may need to have vaccine shots for COVID-19 on a regular basis. More research is needed to know this and it also depends on whether and how much the virus changes over the coming months to years.

9. When will we be protected after we get the vaccine?

- Even when people receive the vaccine they will not be immediately protected and will need to continue wearing masks, social distancing and practicing frequent hand hygiene.
- Some vaccines will require 2 shots, with a few weeks between each shot, and protection will usually occur about 2 weeks after the second shot.
- While no vaccine is 100% effective, some of the vaccines proposed are anticipated to be more than 90% effective. This will greatly reduce your risk of getting sick with COVID-19 and spreading COVID-19 to your loved ones.

10. After I have had the second dose of the vaccine and it is 2 weeks after my second shot, do I still have to wear a mask?

- Yes. Even though you have received your vaccine, most of the people around you have not. We know the vaccine prevents disease in the vaccinated person, but it still may be possible to transmit the disease to others, until the vaccine is in widespread use.
- Wearing a mask, social distancing, and practicing hand hygiene protects those who have not been vaccinated, especially our residents in long-term care.

11. What if I had COVID-19 or I took a test that showed I have antibodies? Should I get the vaccine?

- Yes, even if you have had COVID-19, it is safe to get the vaccine and this can add additional protection without causing any harm.
- If you have had a test that shows you have COVID-19 antibodies, you should still get the vaccine. It is safe and can increase your protection from future COVID-19 infections.

12. What are some of the possible side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine? Will the vaccine make me sick?

- The vaccines currently being tested in clinical trials can cause short-term discomfort (such as headache, muscle pains, fatigue, chills, fever, and pain at injection site) in a percentage of the people who receive them. This is the effect of your body developing immunity. Clinical trial participants reported that the discomfort went away after a day, sometimes sooner. When you receive the second dose of the vaccine, the discomfort can be more pronounced. This is a normal reaction, so be prepared.
- If you experience discomfort after the first dose of the vaccine, it is very important that you still receive the second dose a few weeks later for the vaccine to be effective.
- **This does not mean that the vaccine has given you COVID-19.** Rather, this means that the vaccine is causing your body's immune system to react and create antibodies to fight off the virus. **In other words, if you feel some discomfort, then the vaccine is doing its job!**
- In some cases, a person may **already** be infected with COVID-19 when they get the vaccine but are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic. If they later have symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive for it, it **does not** mean they got COVID-19 from the vaccine.

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13. We should expect that vaccine recommendations will change as additional vaccines are approved.

- At first, we may have one vaccine, then hopefully two or three. As different vaccines become available, some may be found to be better for different populations and different circumstances.
- Just like our knowledge about the virus itself changes over time, so will the recommendations about vaccines.

14. What can I be doing now while we wait for a vaccine to be approved and distributed?

- It is important to know about the process of how a vaccine is approved so you can ask questions.
- Listen to the VRBPAC and ACIP committees' discussions as they are all public. Check the websites for updates:
 - VRBPAC meetings: <https://www.fda.gov/advisory-committees/vaccines-and-related-biological-products-advisory-committee/2020-meeting-materials-vaccines-and-related-biological-products-advisory-committee>
 - Here's a link to the recorded meeting from October 22, 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXTiLgrUpkg>
 - ACIP meetings: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/index.html>
- **Ask your medical director or provider about the vaccine** and have them share information and answer questions. You can talk to them about how they are planning to make their decision to get the COVID-19 vaccine.
- It will be important to get your information from reliable sources, such as the CDC (www.cdc.gov), the Immunization Action Coalition (<https://www.immunize.org>), your facility's medical director, and other providers so you can get accurate information. **Social media is full of misinformation and opinions based on that misinformation, so be careful to look to reputable sources (such as those affiliated with academic institutions or non-profit professional organizations like AMDA) for information.**
- Look for specific data on potential COVID-19 vaccines and listen to/read the scientists' evaluations of the data.

15. Is the flu vaccine also safe and effective?

- **Yes!** The flu vaccine is a good example of how vaccines can help prevent disease and be safe.
- It is more important this year than ever to get your flu shot so you can decrease your risk of getting the flu (you can get both the flu and COVID-19 at the same time), and reduce the spread of flu to others. This will also decrease the burden on healthcare staff who are caring for those with COVID-19.

16. Who will be able to get the vaccine in a nursing home?

- CDC is recommending that nursing home residents and staff be among the first to get the vaccine. Long-term care staff will often be able to get vaccinated before the residents to decrease the risk of exposing the residents to COVID-19. Long-term care staff will include anyone who works in a nursing home, such as those who work in environmental services, not just those who perform direct patient care. This also includes staff who visit the nursing home, including doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, medical directors, lab technicians and consultants.

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Now is the time to understand the process, ask questions and get accurate information!

Additional Resources from the CDC:

CDC: About COVID-19 vaccines. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines.html>

CDC: Provider Resources for COVID-19 Vaccine Conversations with Patients and Answering Patients' Questions. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/covid-conversations/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/covid-conversations/answering-questions.html>

CDC: Understanding the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program and Frequently Asked Questions. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/long-term-care/pharmacy-partnerships.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/long-term-care/pharmacy-partnerships-faqs.html>

CDPH: COVID-19 Vaccine Planning Questions and Answers.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID-19-Vaccine-Planning-Questions-and-Answers.aspx>



Approved by the AMDA Executive Committee
December 1, 2020