

US Centre for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation Opens



The 'Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) has opened its new innovation centre, called for in this year's health reform law, where it plans to study and test models of coordinated, patient-centered and integrated care as an alternative to today's fragmented healthcare system.

The centre will test models that include establishing an "open innovation community" that serves as a clearinghouse of best practices in healthcare innovation. It will consult stakeholders across the health care sector including hospitals, doctors, consumers, payers, states, and others to obtain direct input on its operations and to build partnerships with those that interested in its work.

CMS is already inviting states to apply for funds in December to develop demonstration projects for synchronising care for "dual-eligible" persons, those who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid benefits. According to Richard Gilfillan, MD, acting director of the innovation centre, people who are eligible for both programs account for 16 percent to 18 percent of enrollees in Medicare and Medicaid. Already eight states have been selected to participate in a demonstration project to evaluate the effectiveness of doctors and other health professionals across the care system working in a more integrated fashion and receiving more coordinated payment from Medicare, Medicaid, and private health plans.

The innovation center expects to award up to \$1 million each in design contracts to as many as 15 state programs. In addition it will support two additional dual eligible health care integration demonstrations that will be announced in 2011 and will focus on the role of providers and beneficiaries, respectively.

CMS also announced several new efforts to strengthen primary care in patient-centered, coordinated "health home" and "medical home" concepts. The efforts include the creation of the Federally Qualified Health Center advanced primary care practice demonstration to test the results of clinicians working in teams to treat low-income Medicare patients at 500 community health centers and launch of the Medicaid health home state plan through which patients enrolled in Medicaid with at least two chronic conditions will designate a provider as a "health home" to coordinate treatment.

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