



Related MLN Matters Article #: SE0621

Date Posted: April 10, 2006

Related CR #: N/A

Cultural Competency: A National Health Concern

Key Words

SE0621, Cultural, Competency

Provider Types Affected

This article is for informational purposes only and does not affect Medicare billing processes.

Key Points

- The increasing diversity of the racial, ethnic, and linguistic composition of the United States challenges providers as they strive to deliver health care services.
- Cultural and language differences between patients and providers may generate miscommunication of critical health care information, a lack of compliance with prescribed treatment or medication, or other factors that negatively influence clinical situations and health outcomes.
- Cultural competency, or the ability of health care providers to work effectively with colleagues and patients in cross-cultural situations, is a vital component of professional competence.
- Culturally competent practice can offer a variety of benefits to health care providers and their organizations, including the following:
 - Improved patient care and satisfaction;
 - Decreased malpractice risk;
 - Enhanced operational efficiency;
 - Increased compliance with state and federal regulations; and
 - Reduction in health disparities.

Highlights of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) Activities to Address Health Disparities

- CMS's Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) are working with healthcare providers to become more effective and culturally aware of how they provide care to diverse populations.

- QIOs are recruiting health providers to participate in a FREE online (web-based) program, *A Family Physician's Practical Guide to Culturally Competent Care*, to ensure that Medicare providers are prepared to effectively serve the increasingly diverse patient population.
- QIOs have adopted the Guide as the "Program of Choice" for health care provider cultural competency education.
- The Guide is an innovative educational product designed to equip health care providers with the cultural and linguistic competencies required to improve the quality of care for minority, immigrant, and ethnically diverse communities.
- *A Family Physician's Practical Guide to Culturally Competent Care* is anchored in the three themes of the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care (CLAS).
- It also serves as a key initiative in helping the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health to achieve its mission of "improving the health of racial and ethnic minority populations through the development of effective health policies and programs that help to eliminate disparities in health care."
- *A Family Physician's Practical Guide to Culturally Competent Care* is a case-study-based curriculum, featuring video vignettes, and a diverse group of providers and clinic staff at a fictional practice setting that reinforces learning points throughout the modules.
- Participants can also share their reactions to the case studies in an online bulletin-board feature.
- This curriculum is available to all health care providers at the <http://www.thinkculturalhealth.org> website.
- The program is accredited for Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits for physicians and Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for nurses and pharmacists.

Important Links

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE0621.pdf>

To access the free program, *A Family Physician's Practical Guide to Culturally Competent Care*, please visit the <http://www.thinkculturalhealth.org> website.

The National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health Care are available at the <http://www.omhrc.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15> website.

For more information about the QIO cultural competency initiative, please visit the <http://www.qsource.org/uqiosc/> website.

Additional information about the Office of Minority Health is available at the <http://www.omhrc.gov/> website.