

U.S. House and Senate Notification
Tuesday, March 23, 2010

To: Congressional Health Staff

From: Amy Hall
Director, Office of Legislation
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Subject: Medicare Expands Coverage for Treating Facial Lipodystrophy Syndrome in People Living With HIV

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today announced its decision to cover facial injections for Medicare beneficiaries who experience symptoms of depression due to the stigmatizing appearance of severely hollowed cheeks resulting from drug treatment for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) – a condition known as facial lipodystrophy (LDS). In some cases, facial LDS may be a side effect of antiretroviral medication used in treating HIV infection.

Individuals who take these medications and experience facial LDS may suffer psychological effects that may lead them to discontinue their antiretroviral therapies. CMS' coverage decision allows for treatment of individuals who experience symptoms of depression due to the appearance changes from facial LDS.

The injections covered by today's decision are "fillers" approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) for injection under the skin in the face to help fill out its appearance specifically for treatment of facial LDS. Data show that these injections can improve patient self-image, relieve symptoms of depression, and may lead to improved compliance with anti-HIV treatment.

A press release on today's decision is attached FYI. The final decision memorandum is posted on the CMS Web site at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mcd/viewdecisionmemo.asp?id=234>.

If you any questions about this announcement, please contact the CMS Office of Legislation.

Thank you.