

NURSING HOME ISSUES CONCERNING CARE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

IF A NATIONAL REFERENCE LAB IS THE ONLY PROVIDER OF LABORATORY SERVICES TO NURSING HOMES:

PRIMARY ISSUES	ACTION	OUTCOME
ACCESS TO CARE	<p>Patients will be <u>sent to hospital laboratories</u> to have their blood drawn.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p><u>Nursing home nurses will be responsible for drawing blood samples</u>, and while they are certainly capable of performing these draws, there is a . . .</p>	<p>Instead of paying \$10 or \$20 for their current blood drawing service, nursing homes may have to pay <u>hundreds to thousands of dollars</u> to transport patients, in addition to assuming increased liability and the costs for associated liability insurance.</p> <p>Greater potential for employing poor collection techniques because they don't perform these services on a repetitive day-in/day-out basis. Samples could be hemolyzed, short samples or be compromised on some level, making the collection <u>inadequate</u> for testing purposes.</p> <p>Greater potential for mislabeling vials and ultimately having to rerun tests. <u>Seventy percent of medical treatment decisions are based on lab results.</u> Rerunning tests on samples originally collected for a mislabeled patient will result in <u>the same result, potentially creating increased liability issues that could involve litigation.</u></p> <p>Certainty that <u>less time will be devoted to patient care.</u></p>
SERVICE ISSUES	Serious service issues may arise during the first three-year pilot program.	Nursing Homes will not have any input on the quality of care and service that they are receiving, which is not a good situation for the patients, their families or the nursing home. What recourse will the nursing homes have available to them?
STAFFING ISSUES	Nursing homes must <u>hire additional staff</u> to cover laboratory service requirements. Nursing facilities are reimbursed on a basis of providing a certain level of care to their patients.	The cost of hiring additional staff will negatively impact the bottom line for nursing homes. If the nursing staff has to allocate many more hours a day to collect and process specimens and arrange transport, this will take more nursing time. Phlebotomists make \$11 per hour vs. a nurse's salary of anywhere from \$17 to \$30 per hour. Thus, there will be no savings but rather only additional costs and less patient care.
BILLING ISSUES	Conflict with Medicare Regulations	<p>Current Medicare guidelines state that only the lab that does the testing can bill for Medicare reimbursement for transporting the specimen.</p> <p>The Medicare system is not set up to reimburse nursing facilities for phlebotomy services and travel.</p>
	National labs can charge nursing homes any amount in terms of fees for such things as Medicare Part A, supplies or additional services (infection control reports or attending/consulting fees on lab-related medical issues).	These costs are not currently in the operating budgets for nursing home administrators. Without any caps or controls, nursing home costs will skyrocket.