

Oppose Expansion of Competitive Bidding to Prescribed Urological and Ostomy Prosthetics and Supplies

BACKGROUND

Catheters are essential prosthetic medical supplies used by individuals living with spinal cord injuries and disorders, spina bifida, urinary incontinence, serious bladder impairment (neurogenic bladder), and other urinary medical conditions. For example, individuals with a neurogenic bladder have no bladder function control, and these individuals are at extremely high risk for severe infection to both bladder and kidneys. These infections often lead to otherwise avoidable emergency room visits, hospitalization and even death.

Ostomy medical supplies are used by individuals living with colorectal cancer, bladder cancer, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, birth defects, and other intestinal or urinary medical conditions. People living with an ostomy have undergone surgery to remove their bladder or part of their bowel which impairs their ability to store and eliminate bodily waste. They have a surgically-created opening (stoma) in their abdomen for the discharge of waste. People use ostomy pouches on a daily basis and often for the rest of their lives to help restore the critical function of storing and removing bodily waste. Ostomy and related medical supplies are also necessary in cases of severe abdominal or pelvic trauma as a result of an accident including those sustained during military service.

A proposal in the President's FY2017 Budget expands the competitive bidding program to additional categories, including ostomy and urological supplies. This decision will limit access to prosthetic supplies which need to be clinically prescribed, selected, and/or adjusted and fitted for individuals by specially trained health care professionals based on the unique medical and physical needs of each person in relation to their disease or condition. The incorrect catheters or ostomy supplies can put individuals at risk of severe skin damage, infection, hospitalization and possibly death. Since ostomy and urological medical supplies restore the lost functions of waste storage and elimination, they are defined in the Social Security Act as prosthetics¹.

Medicare, and other payers, need to ensure that individuals have access to the catheters and ostomy supplies prescribed for their use to avoid life-threatening infection and increased health care costs. Ostomy and urological products are clinically prescribed by health care professionals and finding the right product to address both clinical and lifestyle needs can take time and requires continual adjustment over the course of an individual's life. There are approximately 450,000 people living with an ostomy in the United States and approximately a total of 400,000 people living with a spinal cord injury and with spina bifida in the United States.

REQUEST TO POLICYMAKERS

Prescribed products such as urological and ostomy supplies should continue to be excluded from the current competitive bidding program under Medicare for the following reasons:

- They are products prescribed by medical professionals to address a Medicare beneficiary's life-sustaining medical needs, not a one-size-fits-all, off-the-shelf, or over-the-counter generic product.
- They require continual services from a health care professional for selection, fitting, training on use, adjustment, and to mitigate risk associated with health care conditions and clinical complexities that arise.
- The wrong prosthetic supply can result in severe skin damage, infection and illness resulting in hospitalization and increased health care costs.
- Ostomy and urological prosthetic supplies are not used with other durable medical equipment but rather function on their own, replacing a bodily function.
- A 2004 evaluation and report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services² concluded that urological supplies were not well-suited for competitive bidding because there was insufficient potential for Medicare savings.

¹ Title XVIII, §1861(s)(8) of the Social Security Act defines prosthetics as those which replace all or part of an internal body organ, including colostomy bags and supplies directly related to colostomy care, and replacement of such devices.

² Final Report to Congress: Evaluation of Medicare's Competitive Bidding Demonstration for Durable Medical, Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics and Supplies; 2004; Office of the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services.