

OPIOIDS AND HOSPICE STAR RATINGS, TOP REGULATORY ISSUES

Hospice “has become the hot acquisition target of the moment,” Amy Baxter writes for *Home Health Care News*. Buyers have been enticed by high margins and fewer regulatory hurdles when compared to home health care. Still, new regulations regarding opioids and quality reporting loom as public demand and legislation address the need for compliance and transparency. Baxter says these two areas—opioids and hospice star ratings—are top regulatory issues for hospices to watch.

As it currently stands, hospice providers aren’t responsible for prescription drug disposal after a patient dies. Critics say this leaves the door open for abuse of those drugs. Some states like Kentucky have stepped in to allow hospices to dispose of drugs. Meanwhile at the federal level The Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018, was approved by the Senate Health Committee in April, but has not had a floor vote.

Judi Lund Person, MPH, CHC, vice president of regulatory and compliance at NHPCO says this national legislation is a step in the right direction. It doesn’t, however, contain language for hospices to dispose of medications when care plans are switched and patients no longer need the same prescriptions. NHPCO is working with policymakers in hopes of changing the language to address this issue.

The other big focus of regulation has been the hospice quality care reporting measures. CMS introduced the Hospice Compare website, featuring seven Hospice Item Set (HIS) quality measures and a recently added survey form the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers & Systems (CAHPS). These metrics will soon inform a star rating, ranging from one to five.

Hospice providers are also in wait for the implementation of the Hospice Evaluation and Assessment Reporting Tool (HEART). This tool, currently being piloted, will expand the data item set of comprehensive patients assessments, ultimately providing a more comprehensive understanding of “patient needs and service delivery for hospice patients.”

With the coming changes in hospice regulations, an updated regulatory picture of their responsibilities to patients and families are expected to emerge. ([Home Health Care News](#))