Deadline hangs over Medicaid

Some states have decided to adopt Medicare rates

BY LIZ SANDELL, Editor

WASHINGTON - CMS on Jan. 4 gave state Medicaid directors more "open-ended guidance" for complying with a provision in the 21st Century Cures Act, 5111, increasing number of states including Georgia, Indiana and Washington, are planning to adopt Medicare reimbursement for certain DME to comply with the provision, which requires CMS to cap its contribution to Medicaid reimbursement for certain DME to Medicare reimbursement.

"We plan to go on the record with CMS and the administration about our concerns with not only the timeframe, but also the missing information," said Laura Willard, vice president of payer relations for AAHomecare. CMS published a letter to state Medicaid directors on Dec. 27 outlining two options for demonstrating compliance.

Azar's on board

During a Senate confirmation hearing on Jan. 9, Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., asked Alex Azar, the nominee for secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, if he would work with the Office of Management and Budget to "quickly approve" an interim final rule that would provide relief from Medicare's competitive bidding program in non-bid areas. "Yes, senator, I would be happy to work on those issues," Azar told Thune.

Auto Adaptive

Missing: Standards for mods

BY LIZ SANDELL, Editor

WASHINGTON - The clock is ticking for Veterans Affairs to establish quality and safety standards for adaptive equipment and vehicles.

The Veterans Mobility Safety Act, which was signed into law on Dec. 19, 2016, the VA had one year to establish standards.

"They were supposed to update their handbook within a year of enactment, and we're a little behind a year," said Seth Johnson, vice president of government affairs for Pride Mobility Products. "Those deadlines have been known to slide from time to time.

GF takes increasingly global outlook

Ken Spreit

The company announced in December that it was buying Intensa, a healthcare furniture manufacturer based in High Point, N.C., it moves that
Retail, rebound, return?

By Liz Heagle, Editor

A NEW PRODUCT category and a manufacturer transition dominated the most read stories in 2017. "Retail CPAPs floated to the top of the most read list for 2017. First, retail CPAPs represent some of the most recent and most interesting innovations in the HME industry. (We can thank manufacturers for other recent and interesting innovations: remote monitoring capabilities and patient engagement mobile apps.) I can think of only one other space that has come close to this level of innovation," observes Heagle.

Complex rehab manufacturers and their "smart" drive control systems for power wheelchairs. So these stories have that wow factor (cool new technology!) and that need factor (potential new business line)."

REBUILD THEN... Invacare was the subject of two of the most read stories in 2017: "Most Read Stories See Next Page"

Golden wins, gives

Golden Technologies was among the Best Places to Work in Northeastern Pennsylvania, sponsored by the Times Leader Media Group. Employees raised $3,000 for the American Red Cross and its hurricane relief efforts. Golden Technologies matched employee contributions. Pictured, Rich Golden (second from left) presented the donations to Bill Goldsworthy of Red Cross Northeastern Pennsylvania.

It's the return of retail sales

Jordan Flowers of Vintage Vehicles USA says a mobility provider with a Gatsby scooter in their showroom will "knock people's socks off"

By Liz Heagle, Editor

NEXT DEPTFORD, N.J. - Jordan Flowers has grown up in the scooter business, working for four different family-run, mobility related businesses over the years. His latest, Vintage Vehicles USA, which officially launched in January, combines his passions for function and aesthetics. He says what Flowers had to say about why it's the right time for a company that sells nearly $7,000 scooters that look like vintage vehicles.

HME NEWS: How did Vintage Vehicles come to fruition?

Jordan Flowers: I met Vinzenz Hofbauer of Behrens at an international trade show, where we were exhibiting for Active Controls (a manufacturer of drive controls for standard and complex power wheelchairs). He had a great concept that I had been thinking about for years—making scooters look like classic automobiles so they're more relevant to customers. We've become their U.S. distributor.

HME NEWS: Are scooters that look like vintage vehicles more relevant? Flowers: Baby boomers have an issue with getting older. They don't want to buy anything mobility related. That's why we changed the name of the company from Vintage Mobility to Vintage Vehicles. These scooters are cool enough that they're marketing not only to people with disabilities and people who are getting older, but also to people who live in retirement communities or have large estates who just want a way to get around."

HME NEWS: You're selling the scooters through the HME provider network. Flowers: Yes. We're giving them the first crack at it. It's perfect timing, with the return of retail sales to the HME industry. The whole industry is turning back on Medicare and insurance, and less-expensive products. They're flipping back.


Pedors shifts gears

By Liz Heagle, Editor

RESWELL, Ga. - Frustrated by the decreasing number of providers still willing to provide orthopedic shoes for Medicare beneficiaries, Pedors has turned its eyes to physical and occupational therapists.

The company recently launched a "Genetic Footwear Program" that offers PEs and OTs in nursing homes discount codes they can share with their patients to help them offset the cost of therapeutic footwear. "As a shoe company that specializes in orthopedics that was seeing a lot of our core customers drift away—the podiatrists and podiatrists—we needed to take a different approach," said Stephen O'Ilare, president.
Permobil adds power assist to portfolio

LEBANON, Tex. – Permobil has acquired MAX Mobility, the Nashville, Texas-based manufacturer of the SmartDrive power assist device. MAX Mobility’s most recent release, the SmartDrive MX2 with PushTracker, works on virtually any manual wheelchair on the market.

"Almost three out of four manual wheelchair users have shoulder pain already," said Mark Richter, Ph.D., CEO of MAX Mobility, who will join Permobil as senior group innovation advisor, working across the power, manual, and seating and positioning portfolios. "By becoming part of Permobil and adding power assist to the portfolio, we can expand our reach and reduce should pain for users globally."

The SmartDrive device, which weighs just over 12 pounds, attaches to the back of the user’s manual wheelchair and uses a built-in battery to power the chair for miles on a single charge.

Larry Jackson, president of Permobil Business Region Americas, says SmartDrive "greatly expands our offering and will provide an independent mobility solution for our users globally."

MAX Mobility is only the most recent of a number of acquisitions for Permobil in 2017, including Comfort Company in October.

BEDROS SHIFTS

EDENTURE FROM PEDIATRICS

Pedros: Patients can buy footwear directly from Pedros and use the discount code to cover their shipping cost and, if necessary, exchange the products.

Because footwear can help prevent slips and falls, which can lead to more costly complications, the PDs and OTs in nursing homes and long-term care facilities have a vested interest in the market, O'Hare says.

"They're frustrated by the lack of providers, too, but they're not interested in buying footwear or billing for it," he said.

This allows them to make a recommendation, but they're not interested. It simplifies the way they do business.

O'Hare says he doesn't blame providers who are weary from insufficient reimbursement, noncompliance and cumbersome emission tests.

"We've had a decline in sales," he said.

While Pedros is no longer selling direct to consumer — it has an e-commerce component to its website since the late 90s — historically it has relied on its B2B business for the bulk of its sales.

O'Hare says "B2B was what this company was built on," he said. "We still want to support our wholesale customers. We're trying to provide a comprehensive way by keeping their prices competitive."

Tom Fise, executive director of the American Orthotic and Prosthetics Association, says he's not seen a significant number of providers dropping footwear, but he wouldn't be surprised if their volumes of business were on the decline.

As for PDs and OTs in the market, "I would say they are a very small part of the marketplace right now, but that could change," he said.

PERIODICALS

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PHILOS EMBEDS TELHEALTH SERVICES INTO SOLUTIONS

AMSTERDAM and BOSTON – Royal Philips and American Well have entered into a strategic partnership to jointly deliver virtual care solutions around the world. The two companies will work to embed American Well’s mobile telehealth services into an array of Philips solutions, spanning personal health and wellness, population health management and clinical programs. (Philips brings greater consumer professional devices and programs, coupled with powerful analytics, said Ido Schoenberg, M.D., chairman and CEO of American Well. "With the addition of telehealth, we can now offer everything from data collection to care process and clinical intervention.” The first Philips solution to have American Well’s mobile telehealth services embedded in it: the GoGrow parenting app. American Well is the telehealth infrastructure behind the largest payers, hospitals and employers in the U.S., which collectively service more than 150 million Americans, Philips says.)

BRIEFS

SoClean scales with investment backing

EXPERI, Mass. — SoClean, which makes CPAP sanitizing devices, has secured investment backing from DW Healthcare Partners. The funding will allow SoClean, which purported sales rose from $28 million in 2016 to $53 million this year, to expand into the company, according to a press release. "DW Healthcare Partners is ideally suited to take us to the next level," said Robert Wilkins, CEO of SoClean. "Their seasoned healthcare investment team is dedicated to accelerating SoClean's growth to maximize our value. We are confident that the best is yet to come for SoClean in 2018 and beyond.

Tulsa-based DW Healthcare Partners is a healthcare-focused private equity firm that specializes in scaling mid-sized companies. SoClean has revolutionized the way that CPAP machines are cleaned," said Andrew Carragher, co-founder and managing partner of DW Healthcare Partners. "We are excited to be part of the growth that provides such substantive value to its users.

ResMed debuts Mobi

SAN FRANCISCO – ResMed has formally introduced its first portable oxygen concentrator for the market. The company says Mobi will be available to U.S. patients through their HME provider later this quarter, and it is pursuing clearance to sell in other countries in 2018. "We have focused decades of patient-centered ResMed technology and design innovation into this POC," said ResMed CEO Mick Furler. "We've achieved greater mobility, comfort and therapy quality in sleep apnea treatment with Amnis, the world's smallest PAP device. Mobi offers that same great balance to the many millions of people who rely on supplemental oxygen to enjoy their highest quality of life."

"Our team is committed to partnering with our retail and online customers to make home oxygen therapy manageable for everyone," said Matthew Fulwider, president of the home oxygen therapy market in 2015 when it bought Austin, Texas-based Invacare Technologies, the manufacturer of Invacare LinQ/O2 Start, an ultra-light POC, and the Arthritis O2Go, an integrated stationary and POC system.

COMPANY NEWS

FLOWERS

GEMSTONE-turned-into-precious-powerful-

cash sales and to feature rich and quality-
driven products. A mobility provider who has this scooter in his showroom—it knocks people socks off.

MHE: You were at Medtrade in the fall of 2017. What was the reception there? Flowers: I knew we were a hit when we sold out of all our available demo units. This was before the first production units arrived in early December.

MHE: You currently offer a Gatsby model. What’s next for Pedros? Flowers: We’re working with them on developing accessories for the market. At our request, they’re working on a heavier-duty version with a bigger battery and motor. Our next design is based on a "G" Chevy pickup truck.

MHE: What keeps you keep innovating, specifically in this industry? Flowers: It helps when you do to bed feeling like you are helping someone continue to get around. I’ve had a passion for it my whole life, growing up in the business, riding scooters around.

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