

News You Can Use

Medicare Paying For Preventive Cholesterol Screening For The First Time

(NAPSA)—Thirty-nine million Americans who receive Medicare now have access to an important tool for fighting heart disease: cholesterol blood tests.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and seniors account for more than 84 percent of annual cardiovascular deaths. An estimated 25 million Medicare-eligible seniors suffer from coronary heart disease, and nearly 800,000 seniors die from cardiovascular disease annually, according to the National Cholesterol Education Program.


Now, for the first time, all Medicare-eligible beneficiaries have guaranteed access to office based cholesterol blood tests for the early detection of cardiovascular disease. As part of the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA), all Medicare beneficiaries will have access to cholesterol screening and all new members will be covered for a physical examination, which includes a cholesterol blood test.

“Cholesterol screening is vitally important to identify individuals at risk because treatment is proven to save lives,” said Lori Mosca, MD, PhD, director, preventive cardiology at New York-Presbyterian Hospital. “Providing access to screening to seniors, the population segment most likely to develop heart problems, can have a huge impact on the burden of heart disease as more than 40 percent of patients die from an initial heart attack.”

Previously, Medicare beneficiaries were only covered for cholesterol tests if they had already been diagnosed with heart disease, stroke, diabetes or other disorders associated with high cholesterol. In many cases, eligible seniors were already victims of conditions that cholesterol screening might have caught and treat-

Lower Your Risk of Heart Disease

Learn the facts about cholesterol and talk to your doctor about:

- A diet low in saturated fats and cholesterol
- Exercising for an average of 30 minutes a day
- Regular cholesterol screening. 

ment may have prevented.

“We encourage all Medicare members to call their doctor and take advantage of this improved access to cholesterol testing as we know it will significantly improve the quality of cardiac health care for seniors,” said Mark Wurster, MD, director, point of care testing, The Ohio State University Primary Care Network. “In our practice, we selected the Cholestech LDX system because it generates results in five minutes that are as accurate as an outside lab. This allows us to test for cholesterol, review the results and provide counsel on treatment options all in the same office visit.”

Using a single drop of blood, the Cholestech LDX office based system measures a patient’s lipid profile to determine overall cholesterol levels and the patient’s risk of heart disease. The lipid profile includes total cholesterol; high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or “good” cholesterol; low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or “bad” cholesterol; and triglycerides, a form of fat that often results in high total cholesterol, increasing a patient’s risk for heart disease.

To learn more about office based cholesterol screening and reducing their risk of heart disease, seniors should consult their physician or visit www.americanheart.org.