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National Visiting Nurse Association Week Focuses on Vulnerable Patients

Study Highlights Importance of Home Health Nursing Services

WASHINGTON - May 6, 2013 - The [Visiting Nurse Associations of America](#) (VNAA) joins hundreds of organizations across the country in celebrating National Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) Week, May 6-10, 2013. The second week of May has been set aside as a special time to recognize the tireless efforts of nonprofit health care providers who deliver high-quality home health, hospice and palliative care to elderly and disabled patients in homes and community-based settings nationwide.

In recognition, VNAA is releasing the preliminary results of a study that examines whether certain characteristics of vulnerable patients may limit access to essential services because of inadequate Medicare reimbursement. VNAA completed this study in partnership with the [Center for Home Care Policy and Research](#) at the [Visiting Nurse Services of New York](#) (VNSNY), and with financial support from the [Community Health Accreditation Program](#) (CHAP).

Tracey Moorhead, President and CEO of VNAA noted "This study is critical to understanding how our members serve vulnerable patients and how Congress and the Administration can ensure that seniors and disabled populations retain access to the Medicare home health services they need by providing appropriate reimbursement to cover costs."

"The initial findings of this study underscore that reform of the home health PPS must include a rebalancing of payments toward vulnerable, clinically complex patients," said Mary Ann Christopher, President and CEO of Visiting Nurse Service of New York and Chair of the VNAA Public Policy Council. "The Vulnerable Patient Study mandated by the Affordable Care Act will be informed by this valuable research. Reimbursement policy, beginning with rebasing of the PPS in 2014, should reflect a unique commitment to those at-risk beneficiaries."

Robert J. Rosati, Ph.D., Vice President of Clinical Informatics at VNSNY and lead author of the study, noted that initial findings indicate that payments for Medicare home health services have lower reimbursement compared to cost for patients who:

- Live in communities with lower median household incomes
- Are clinically complex and considered frail
- Have poorly controlled chronic conditions (e.g. hypertension, diabetes, vascular disease)
- Have pressure ulcers that are difficult to heal or have urinary/bowel incontinence
- Require intensive treatments (respiratory, intravenous or infusion therapy) or must be fed intravenously
- Have no caregiver assistance for activities of daily living (e.g. eating, mobility, dressing, toilet hygiene) or are unable to manage medication and basic self-care tasks

VNSNY and VNAA collected the OASIS and claims records from Medicare episodes provided in 2011, by 26 nonprofit home healthcare agencies, across the United States. The VNAA study is currently being considered for publication. For more details on the study please contact Kathleen Sheehan at ksheehan@vnaa.org or (202) 384-1456.

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About VNA Week:

Visiting Nurse Associations Week was established by Congress in 2005 in order to increase awareness of the charity-based mission of VNAs. VNAs are non-profit home health agencies that provide community-based home health care to individuals regardless of their condition or ability to pay for services. VNAs have served communities around the country for over 120 years and have been the health care safety net for millions of Americans, many of who are chronically ill and disabled and unable to pay for their care. Further information and materials about VNA Week may be found at <http://vnaa.org/vna-week>.

About VNAA:

VNAA is the national association that supports, promotes and advances nonprofit providers of high quality home health, hospice and palliative care. These providers are community-based and also provide a full range of prevention and healthcare programs. VNAA members share a mission to provide cost-effective and compassionate care to some of the nation's most vulnerable individuals, particularly the elderly and individuals with disabilities. For more information on VNAA, visit <http://www.VNAA.org>.