Participation in Quality Reporting Higher in 2008

BY JOYCE FRIEDEN

Health professionals participating in Medicare's Physician Quality Reporting Initiative received $92 million in incentive payments under the program in 2008, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced.

That's nearly three times the $36 million paid out in 2007, the agency noted. The number of medical professionals receiving payments also increased during the same period, from 57,000 to 85,000. The average payment in 2008 was more than $1,000, with the largest single payment at $98,000. During 2007, the reporting period lasted only 6 months for all participants, while in 2008 participants could report for a 6- or 12-month period.

"We are very pleased with the results for 2008," acting CMS administrator Charlene Frizerra said in a statement. "More health professionals have successfully reported data, and the substantial growth in the national total for PQRI incentive payments demonstrates that Medicare can align payment with quality incentives."

Under Medicare's PQRI program, providers receive incentive payments for reporting data on quality measures. These payments amount to 1.5% of each provider's total estimated allowed charges under Medicare Part B. There were more than 153,000 participants in the program during 2008, but only 85,000 met the requirements for satisfactory reporting and therefore received incentive payments.

To make participation easier, the CMS expanded the number of measures providers could report on, from 74 in 2007 to 119 in 2008. ■