

## Just the Facts: Hospital Readmissions

In 2014, 36 Minnesota hospitals –almost one-third of the hospitals being evaluated – were penalized for excessive readmissions by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Reducing hospital readmissions is critical for the health of patients, and making the health care system more effective.

### The Role of Family Caregivers

Health care experts say caregiver training and engagement is vital to improving care transitions – when patients are discharged from the hospital – and preventing costly readmissions.

**Once a patient leaves the hospital, family caregivers are the front line of defense against costly hospital readmissions.**

Every day, these caregivers work hard to safely help their loved ones live independently, at home. They:

- ♥ Help their loved ones to bathe and dress.
- ♥ Administer multiple medications – including injections.
- ♥ Provide wound care and perform many other complicated medical or nursing tasks.

**Yet, most family caregivers report that they receive little or no help in understanding how to perform these important tasks.**

### How The CARE Act Helps

The Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable (CARE) Act is a basic first step to engage family caregivers in the hospital setting so they may safely provide care for their loved ones at home – care that can help prevent costly hospital readmissions. The bill:

- ♥ Allows a patient to designate a caregiver when admitted into a hospital.
- ♥ Requires the hospital to notify the family caregiver before the patient is discharged or transferred.
- ♥ Requires the hospital to provide an explanation and live instruction of the medical tasks – like medication management, injections, wound care, and transfers – that the family caregiver will be expected to perform at home.

### How Medicare Fights Hospital Readmissions

CMS introduced the Medicare Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program in 2010 as an incentive for hospitals to reduce costly readmissions – and improve care. According to CMS, about one in five Medicare patients discharged from a hospital are readmitted within 30 days.

The national median 30-day readmission rate is:

- ♥ 20% for heart attack patients
- ♥ 25% for heart failure patients
- ♥ 18% for pneumonia patients

The goal of the Program is to improve quality of care and reduce avoidable illness and mortality by encouraging hospitals to invest in ways that will:

- ♥ Reduce complications
- ♥ Smooth care transitions through initiatives like those that engage patients and families in care planning.

Hospitals with excessive readmissions face financial penalties:

- ♥ For excessive 30-day readmissions related to 3 conditions – heart attack, heart failure, and pneumonia – Medicare payments are reduced by up to 1%.
- ♥ The reduction in payment rises to 3% in 2015, when the Program expands to include 7 conditions.

More than 2,000 hospitals in the U.S. were penalized about \$227 million for excessive hospital readmissions by CMS in 2013. That's two-thirds of all U.S. hospitals.

*While not all readmissions can be prevented, research shows hospitals can use effective strategies to avoid many of them. Patients and their family caregivers want and need to play their part in reducing readmissions, and the CARE Act is an important step that will help them share in this responsibility.*