

Medicare+Choice (M+C) plan, may be admitted at the time it would be medically appropriate to begin an active course of treatment.

(ii) If, upon admission to the SNF, the beneficiary was enrolled in an M+C plan, as defined in §422.4 of this chapter, offering the benefits described in §422.101(c) of this chapter, the beneficiary will be considered to have met the requirements described in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, and also in §409.31(b)(2), for the duration of the SNF stay.

[48 FR 12541, Mar. 25, 1983, as amended at 51 FR 41338, Nov. 14, 1986; 58 FR 30666, 30667, May 26, 1993; 62 FR 46025, Aug. 29, 1997; 63 FR 26307, May 12, 1998; 64 FR 41681, July 30, 1999; 68 FR 50584, Aug. 22, 2003; 72 FR 43436, Aug. 3, 2007]

#### § 409.31 Level of care requirement.

(a) *Definition.* As used in this section, *skilled nursing and skilled rehabilitation services* means services that:

- (1) Are ordered by a physician;
- (2) Require the skills of technical or professional personnel such as registered nurses, licensed practical (vocational) nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech pathologists or audiologists; and
- (3) Are furnished directly by, or under the supervision of, such personnel.

(b) *Specific conditions for meeting level of care requirements.* (1) The beneficiary must require skilled nursing or skilled rehabilitation services, or both, on a daily basis.

(2) Those services must be furnished for a condition—

(i) For which the beneficiary received inpatient hospital or inpatient CAH services; or

(ii) Which arose while the beneficiary was receiving care in a SNF or swing-bed hospital for a condition for which he or she received inpatient hospital or inpatient CAH services; or

(iii) For which, for an M+C enrollee described in §409.20(c)(4), a physician has determined that a direct admission to a SNF without an inpatient hospital or inpatient CAH stay would be medically appropriate.

(3) The daily skilled services must be ones that, as a practical matter, can

only be provided in a SNF, on an inpatient basis.

[48 FR 12541, Mar. 25, 1983, as amended at 58 FR 30666, May 26, 1993; 68 FR 50854, Aug. 22, 2003; 70 FR 45055, Aug. 4, 2005]

#### § 409.32 Criteria for skilled services and the need for skilled services.

(a) To be considered a skilled service, the service must be so inherently complex that it can be safely and effectively performed only by, or under the supervision of, professional or technical personnel.

(b) A condition that does not ordinarily require skilled services may require them because of special medical complications. Under those circumstances, a service that is usually nonskilled (such as those listed in §409.33(d)) may be considered skilled because it must be performed or supervised by skilled nursing or rehabilitation personnel. For example, a plaster cast on a leg does not usually require skilled care. However, if the patient has a preexisting acute skin condition or needs traction, skilled personnel may be needed to adjust traction or watch for complications. In situations of this type, the complications, and the skilled services they require, must be documented by physicians' orders and nursing or therapy notes.

(c) The restoration potential of a patient is not the deciding factor in determining whether skilled services are needed. Even if full recovery or medical improvement is not possible, a patient may need skilled services to prevent further deterioration or preserve current capabilities. For example, a terminal cancer patient may need some of the skilled services described in §409.33.

[48 FR 12541, Mar. 25, 1983, as amended at 59 FR 65493, Dec. 20, 1994]

#### § 409.33 Examples of skilled nursing and rehabilitation services.

(a) *Services that could qualify as either skilled nursing or skilled rehabilitation services—(1) Overall management and evaluation of care plan.* (i) When overall management and evaluation of care plan constitute skilled services. The development, management, and evaluation of a patient care plan based on the physician's orders constitute skilled

services when, because of the patient's physical or mental condition, those activities require the involvement of technical or professional personnel in order to meet the patient's needs, promote recovery, and ensure medical safety. Those activities include the management of a plan involving a variety of personal care services only when, in light of the patient's condition, the aggregate of those services requires the involvement of technical or professional personnel.

(ii) *Example.* An aged patient with a history of diabetes mellitus and angina pectoris who is recovering from an open reduction of a fracture of the neck of the femur requires, among other services, careful skin care, appropriate oral medications, a diabetic diet, an exercise program to preserve muscle tone and body condition, and observation to detect signs of deterioration in his or her condition or complications resulting from restricted, but increasing, mobility. Although any of the required services could be performed by a properly instructed person, such a person would not have the ability to understand the relationship between the services and evaluate the ultimate effect of one service on the other. Since the nature of the patient's condition, age, and immobility create a high potential for serious complications, such an understanding is essential to ensure the patient's recovery and safety. Under these circumstances, the management of the plan of care would require the skills of a nurse even though the individual services are not skilled. Skilled planning and management activities are not always specifically identified in the patient's clinical record. Therefore, if the patient's overall condition supports a finding that recovery and safety can be ensured only if the total care is planned, managed, and evaluated by technical or professional personnel, it is appropriate to infer that skilled services are being provided.

(2) *Observation and assessment of the patient's changing condition—(i) When observation and assessment constitute skilled services.* Observation and assessment constitute skilled services when the skills of a technical or professional person are required to identify and

evaluate the patient's need for modification of treatment or for additional medical procedures until his or her condition is stabilized.

(ii) *Examples.* A patient with congestive heart failure may require continuous close observation to detect signs of decompensation, abnormal fluid balance, or adverse effects resulting from prescribed medication(s) that serve as indicators for adjusting therapeutic measures. Similarly, surgical patients transferred from a hospital to an SNF while in the complicated, unstabilized postoperative period, for example, after hip prosthesis or cataract surgery, may need continued close skilled monitoring for postoperative complications and adverse reaction. Patients who, in addition to their physical problems, exhibit acute psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, or agitation, may also require skilled observation and assessment by technical or professional personnel to ensure their safety or the safety of others, that is, to observe for indications of suicidal or hostile behavior. The need for services of this type must be documented by physicians' orders or nursing or therapy notes.

(3) *Patient education services—(i) When patient education services constitute skilled services.* Patient education services are skilled services if the use of technical or professional personnel is necessary to teach a patient self-maintenance.

(ii) *Examples.* A patient who has had a recent leg amputation needs skilled rehabilitation services provided by technical or professional personnel to provide gait training and to teach prosthesis care. Similarly, a patient newly diagnosed with diabetes requires instruction from technical or professional personnel to learn the self-administration of insulin or foot-care precautions.

(b) *Services that qualify as skilled nursing services.* (1) Intravenous or intramuscular injections and intravenous feeding.

(2) Enteral feeding that comprises at least 26 per cent of daily calorie requirements and provides at least 501 milliliters of fluid per day.

(3) Nasopharyngeal and tracheostomy aspiration;

(4) Insertion and sterile irrigation and replacement of suprapubic catheters;

(5) Application of dressings involving prescription medications and aseptic techniques;

(6) Treatment of extensive decubitus ulcers or other widespread skin disorder;

(7) Heat treatments which have been specifically ordered by a physician as part of active treatment and which require observation by nurses to adequately evaluate the patient's progress;

(8) Initial phases of a regimen involving administration of medical gases;

(9) Rehabilitation nursing procedures, including the related teaching and adaptive aspects of nursing, that are part of active treatment, e.g., the institution and supervision of bowel and bladder training programs.

(c) *Services which would qualify as skilled rehabilitation services.* (1) Ongoing assessment of rehabilitation needs and potential: Services concurrent with the management of a patient care plan, including tests and measurements of range of motion, strength, balance, coordination, endurance, functional ability, activities of daily living, perceptual deficits, speech and language or hearing disorders;

(2) Therapeutic exercises or activities: Therapeutic exercises or activities which, because of the type of exercises employed or the condition of the patient, must be performed by or under the supervision of a qualified physical therapist or occupational therapist to ensure the safety of the patient and the effectiveness of the treatment;

(3) Gait evaluation and training: Gait evaluation and training furnished to restore function in a patient whose ability to walk has been impaired by neurological, muscular, or skeletal abnormality;

(4) Range of motion exercises: Range of motion exercises which are part of the active treatment of a specific disease state which has resulted in a loss of, or restriction of, mobility (as evidenced by a therapist's notes showing the degree of motion lost and the degree to be restored);

(5) Maintenance therapy; Maintenance therapy, when the specialized

knowledge and judgment of a qualified therapist is required to design and establish a maintenance program based on an initial evaluation and periodic reassessment of the patient's needs, and consistent with the patient's capacity and tolerance. For example, a patient with Parkinson's disease who has not been under a rehabilitation regimen may require the services of a qualified therapist to determine what type of exercises will contribute the most to the maintenance of his present level of functioning.

(6) Ultrasound, short-wave, and microwave therapy treatment by a qualified physical therapist;

(7) Hot pack, hydrocollator, infrared treatments, paraffin baths, and whirlpool; Hot pack hydrocollator, infrared treatments, paraffin baths, and whirlpool in particular cases where the patient's condition is complicated by circulatory deficiency, areas of desensitization, open wounds, fractures, or other complications, and the skills, knowledge, and judgment of a qualified physical therapist are required; and

(8) Services of a speech pathologist or audiologist when necessary for the restoration of function in speech or hearing.

(d) *Personal care services.* Personal care services which do not require the skills of qualified technical or professional personnel are not skilled services except under the circumstances specified in § 409.32(b). Personal care services include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) Administration of routine oral medications, eye drops, and ointments;

(2) General maintenance care of colostomy and ileostomy;

(3) Routine services to maintain satisfactory functioning of indwelling bladder catheters;

(4) Changes of dressings for non-infected postoperative or chronic conditions;

(5) Prophylactic and palliative skin care, including bathing and application of creams, or treatment of minor skin problems;

(6) Routine care of the incontinent patient, including use of diapers and protective sheets;

(7) General maintenance care in connection with a plaster cast;

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(8) Routine care in connection with braces and similar devices;

(9) Use of heat as a palliative and comfort measure, such as whirlpool and hydrocollator;

(10) Routine administration of medical gases after a regimen of therapy has been established;

(11) Assistance in dressing, eating, and going to the toilet;

(12) Periodic turning and positioning in bed; and

(13) General supervision of exercises which have been taught to the patient; including the actual carrying out of maintenance programs, i.e., the performance of the repetitive exercises required to maintain function do not require the skills of a therapist and would not constitute skilled rehabilitation services (see paragraph (c) of this section). Similarly, repetitious exercises to improve gait, maintain strength, or endurance; passive exercises to maintain range of motion in paralyzed extremities, which are not related to a specific loss of function; and assistive walking do not constitute skilled rehabilitation services.

[48 FR 12541, Mar. 25, 1983, as amended at 63 FR 26307, May 12, 1998; 64 FR 41681, July 30, 1999]

**§ 409.34 Criteria for “daily basis”.**

(a) To meet the daily basis requirement specified in § 409.31(b)(1), the following frequency is required:

(1) Skilled nursing services or skilled rehabilitation services must be needed and provided 7 days a week; or

(2) As an exception, if skilled rehabilitation services are not available 7 days a week those services must be needed and provided at least 5 days a week.

(b) A break of one or two days in the furnishing of rehabilitation services will not preclude coverage if discharge would not be practical for the one or two days during which, for instance, the physician has suspended the therapy sessions because the patient exhibited extreme fatigue.

**§ 409.35 Criteria for “practical matter”.**

(a) *General considerations.* In making a “practical matter” determination, as required by § 409.31(b)(3), consideration must be given to the patient’s condi-

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tion and to the availability and feasibility of using more economical alternative facilities and services. However, in making that determination, the availability of Medicare payment for those services may not be a factor. Example: The beneficiary can obtain daily physical therapy from a physical therapist in independent practice. However, Medicare pays only the appropriate portion (after deduction of applicable deductible and coinsurance amounts) of the first \$500 of services furnished by such a practitioner in a year. This limitation on payment may not be a basis for finding that the needed care can only be provided in a SNF.

(b) *Examples of circumstances that meet practical matter criteria—*(1) *Beneficiary’s condition.* Inpatient care would be required “as a practical matter” if transporting the beneficiary to and from the nearest facility that furnishes the required daily skilled services would be an excessive physical hardship.

(2) *Economy and efficiency.* Even if the beneficiary’s condition does not preclude transportation, inpatient care might be more efficient and less costly if, for instance, the only alternative is daily transportation by ambulance.

[48 FR 12541, Mar. 25, 1983, as amended at 50 FR 33033, Aug. 16, 1985]

**§ 409.36 Effect of discharge from posthospital SNF care.**

If a beneficiary is discharged from a facility after receiving posthospital SNF care, he or she is not entitled to additional services of this kind in the same benefit period unless—

(a) He or she is readmitted to the same or another facility within 30 calendar days following the day of discharge (or, before December 5, 1980, within 14 calendar days after discharge); or

(b) He or she is again hospitalized for at least 3 consecutive calendar days.

**Subpart E—Home Health Services Under Hospital Insurance**

**§ 409.40 Basis, purpose, and scope.**

This subpart implements sections 1814(a)(2)(C), 1835(a)(2)(A), and 1861(m) of the Act with respect to the requirements that must be met for Medicare