

**CMS PROPOSED NATIONAL COVERAGE DETERMINATION (NCD)**  
**MEDICARE PROPOSES COVERAGE FOR SCREENING FOR DEPRESSION IN OLDER ADULTS**

THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY  
COMMENTS · AUGUST 19, 2011

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS) is the nation's largest association of geriatrics healthcare professionals, with nearly 6,000 members. We, and our members, are dedicated to improving the health, independence and quality of life of older people through initiatives in clinical practice, professional and public education, research, and public policy advocacy.

We support the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' proposal to establish a National Coverage Determination (NCD) to cover annual depression screening for adults in primary care settings as an additional preventive benefit under Medicare. Depression that goes undetected and untreated is associated with subsequent cardiac and other co-morbidity, and even death amongst the frail elderly. AGS strongly supports efforts to ensure that this population has access to appropriate treatment and to remove economic barriers to treatment, such as cost-sharing.

We agree with the proposed NCD's requirement to "cover annual screening for depression for Medicare beneficiaries in primary care settings that have staff-assisted depression care supports in place to assure accurate diagnosis, effective treatment, and follow-up." We additionally support the proposal's guidance in regards to the minimum level of staff-assisted depression care support, consisting of clinical staff in the primary care setting who can discuss screening results with the clinician and also coordinate referrals or other needed follow-up care.

As CMS moves to finalize its proposed NCD for screening for depression in older adults, our goal at AGS is to share our expert knowledge on the matter and serve as a resource to CMS. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Susie Sherman, Coordinator of AGS Public Affairs and Advocacy at: [ssherman@americangeriatrics.com](mailto:ssherman@americangeriatrics.com) or (212) 308.1414.