



6 hospitals in Western Pennsylvania, West Virginia get federal money to try to reduce readmissions

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Six community hospitals in Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia will tackle the costly problem of patients returning to the hospital too quickly after being discharged.

The Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative, with a \$10 million federal grant, will set up a program to reduce preventable readmissions at Butler Memorial Hospital, Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center in Johnstown, Indiana Regional Medical Center, Sharon Regional Health System, Uniontown Hospital and Wheeling Hospital.

The program will focus on improving the health of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease. With improved health, it is expected the patients will require less hospitalization.

“Better care will result in both better health and in lower costs — an estimated \$40 million to the Medicare program alone,” the health initiative said in a written statement.

Led by Dr. Keith Kanel, the initiative's chief medical officer, the program will focus on primary care, such as getting patients to quit smoking, eat better and take their medications consistently, so they don't get to the point of needing hospital care.

Medicare, the federal government's insurance program for the elderly, wants to have readmissions decline. In October, it began cutting reimbursements to hospitals with too many patients who returned with the same problem in 30 days or less.

The Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative, an organization of medical, business and civic leaders working on health care safety and quality improvements, was founded in 1997 by former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and Karen Wolk Feinstein, president of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation of Pittsburgh.

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