



CMA Weekly Alert (2 of 2) – November 17, 2005

THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT® – MEDICARE CAN HELP

Today, November 17, 2005, is the Great American Smokeout®, a day in which Americans are encouraged to quit the smoking habit once and for all. In March of this year, Medicare created a new “National Coverage Determination” to add Medicare coverage for smoking cessation counseling. Counseling must be provided by a physician or other Medicare certified provider and can be on an inpatient or out-patient basis. Medicare beneficiaries must qualify for the cessation counseling by having an illness caused or complicated by tobacco use, including heart diseases, cerebrovascular disease, lung disease, weak bones, blood clots, or cataracts. Intermediate or intensive cessation strategies are covered for two cessation attempts per year. (Minimal level counseling was already covered as part of an evaluation visit). Each attempt may include a maximum of four sessions, for a total benefit of eight sessions in a twelve-month period.

For further information on this National Coverage Determination or information on Medicare preventive health benefits, contact Ellen Lang, RN, MPH, Medical Advocacy Coordinator, elang@medicareadvocay.org in the Center for Medicare Advocacy’s Connecticut office at (860) 456-7790.