

STAKEHOLDERS WATCHING CMS' POTENTIAL MODELS RULE FOR RADIATION DEMO

Milena Sullivan with Avalere said a mandatory radiation oncology bundle that HHS signaled was in the works last year could be part of a proposed rule under review at the White House Office of Management and Budget, and others following the rule also said they wouldn't be surprised to see the model included.

"We know that there is a proposed rule that is pending with OMB at the moment that would contain several specialty models, one of which is, we're expecting for it to be a mandatory radiation bundle," Sullivan speculated during an Avalere webinar on the oncology sector on Tuesday (May 21).

A proposed rule, entitled "Potential Model Updates," has been under OMB review since April 19. CMS' regulatory agenda post on the rule doesn't include many details, saying only, "This proposed rule would discuss potential models and/or model changes." The agenda also says that whether the proposal will be deemed a major rule is undetermined.

One lobbyist following the rule said the radiation oncology demo is likely on the way, so it wouldn't be surprising to see it included in that rule.

Azar last November indicated that CMS was actively exploring a mandatory radiation therapy demonstration. Radiation oncologists

at the time raised concerns about making such a demo mandatory. CMS is an internal transmittal to contractors dated February 15 laid out a proposal for a prospective bundled payment radiation oncology model that would replace fee-for-service payments in randomly selected geographic areas, though the agency at the time said the transmittal was inadvertently posted and for internal planning only at that point.

David Introcaso, vice president of regulatory policy at Strategic Health Care, also said it wouldn't be a surprise to see the model included in the potential model update rule. If CMS wants to get such a model started by next year, it needs to move on it pretty quickly, he added.

The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) is expecting the demo soon.

"We do not yet know if our APM is included in the package under review at OMB, or if it will be part of the larger Medicare payment rules. We are hopeful, of course, and we also are anticipating that a proposal will be released this summer," said Anne Hubbard, director of health policy for ASTRO. ■