

## **Prompting Patients about Sensitive Issues Opens Dialogue And May Improve Patient Satisfaction Scores**

Asking your Medicare Advantage patients about specific, and sometimes, sensitive health issues not only helps you diagnose and treat, but may improve your patient satisfaction scores as well.

For example, according to the CDC, more than one out of four older people fall, but less than half tell their doctor. Taking the time to proactively discuss ways to improve balance to prevent falls, something your patients may not address, demonstrates to your patients -- and our members -- you are interested in their overall health and ways to improve it. This, in turn, can improve their perception of the care they receive.

As you may know, CMS administers the annual [Health Outcomes Survey](#) (HOS) to Medicare managed care beneficiaries to measure their physical and mental health status and assess their Medicare Advantage organization's ability over a two-year period to maintain or improve their members' health. This survey is used in part to determine CMS Stars performance levels.

Two areas of focus of HOS are the prevention of falls and improving bladder control. Your patients may be embarrassed bringing these topics up to you or answering honestly when asked about them. Helping them feel comfortable discussing these topics with you may not only help improve their physical and emotional health, but HOS ratings as well.

Take a look at a few of the questions your patients may be asked on the HOS and how you can rephrase these same questions to open a dialogue with your patients.

<b>Fall Prevention</b>	
<b>HOS Patient Questions</b>	<b>Rephrasing by the Provider</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you talked with your doctor about falling or problems with balance and walking in the past 12 months?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sometimes as we get older, we may have problems with our balance or walking. How has your balance been lately? Have you noticed any difference in your balance?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you experienced a fall in the past six months? Has your doctor done anything to help you prevent falls?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you had a fall since the last time I've seen you? I'd like to hear more about it. What happened? I'd like to spend some time today talking about what we can do to improve your balance or ways to prevent future falls. Is this something you would like to discuss?</li> </ul>

<b>Improving Bladder Control</b>	
<b>HOS Patient Questions</b>	<b>Rephrasing by the Provider</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you accidentally leaked urine in the last six months?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes as we get older, we can accidentally leak urine. I know this is a sensitive topic, but it is very common and there are ways to improve this. Have you had a problem with this since the last time I've seen you?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much did urine leakage force a change in daily activities or interfere with sleep?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this affecting your day-to-day activities or how you're sleeping? Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>• I'd like to spend some time today talking about some of the ways we can improve this so you can get back to your normal activities and get a good night's sleep. Is this something you would like to discuss?</li> </ul>

When seeing your patients, it's important to bring up these topics in your discussion on their overall physical and mental health – even if they don't mention them. If you don't already have a patient checklist, here is an [example](#) for you to use as a guide. Print the checklist on bright colored paper and have available to patients when they check in. They can complete it while waiting for their exam and give to you at their appointment. This is a great way to start the conversation about how they are feeling and what their concerns are.

Your patients rely on you to help them stay healthy – mentally and physically. And, as our BlueMedicare<sup>SM</sup> Medicare Advantage partner, we rely on you to do this. We are here to help you by providing tools and resources such as the checklist. By working together in the best interest of our member – your patient – we can help ensure their satisfaction with the quality care they are receiving from you.