

Medicare Administrator Sketches Agency's Agenda

By Shira Stein

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The Medicare and Medicaid agency plans to take more action on drug pricing and make changes to payment and service delivery models in the coming months, according to the agency's administrator, Seema Verma.

Verma spoke at the American's Health Insurance Plans conference Oct. 16 ahead of the release of the agency's fall regulatory agenda.

The Trump administration's fall 2018 unified regulatory agenda is expected to be released Oct. 17, which should have more details on the agency's next steps.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid plans to give Medicare Part D prescription drugs plans more tools to negotiate.

The agency also plans to make changes to existing models, such as the Value-Based Insurance Design model, and introduce new models, Verma said. The VBID model allows Medicare Advantage (managed care) plans to offer supplemental benefits or reduced cost sharing to beneficiaries with specific chronic conditions.

The agency is looking at the VBID model to see "how we could lift additional barriers so that plans can better meet patient needs, to lower drug costs for patients and so that plan incentives are aligned with beneficiary incentives," Verma said.

The new models could include one for people with chronic disease and a model to create incentives for beneficiaries to seek out health-care providers that provide high quality care at lower costs.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation Director Adam Boehler has previously indicated that the agency plans to take more action on models in the coming months.

The agency also plans to continue pushing insurers to make their health-care claims data available to applications. The Medicare agency has done this through their Blue Button 2.0 initiative.

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