

## **Reap the benefits of PEPPER and reduce your error rate!**

NORTH DAKOTA HEALTH CARE REVIEW, INC., TO PROVIDE  
ELECTRONIC REPORTS TRAINING TO HOSPITALS

***Training will help hospitals to be proactive in reducing payment errors, audit risk***

September 28, 2005—North Dakota Health Care Review, Inc. (NDHCRI) now has free training available for acute-care Prospective Payment System (PPS) hospitals in North Dakota on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “PEPPER” (Program for Evaluating Payment Patterns Electronic Report) electronic reporting tool.

PEPPER provides summary statistics of administrative claims data on CMS target areas (areas likely to have payment errors due to billing, DRG/coding and/or admission necessity issues). Hospitals can use PEPPER to review their data for the current quarters and the previous three fiscal years for each of the areas targeted for improvement by CMS, and compare their performance to that of the other acute-care PPS hospitals within their state. They can also use the tool to compare their own data across years to identify significant changes in billing practices; pinpoint areas in need of auditing; identify potential DRG under- or over-coding problems; and identify target areas where length-of-stay is increasing. PEPPER can help hospitals achieve CMS’ goal of achieving transformational change for the reduction of payment errors.

“PEPPER can provide hospitals with benchmarks on where they stand on compliance and audit risk, and this training will help in these risk reduction efforts,” says Julie Thrailkill, RHIT, Director of Review. “We are happy to help the local health care community use this invaluable resource.”

This training is provided at the direction of CMS through TMF Health Quality Institute (TMF), which is under contract with CMS as the Hospital Payment Monitoring Program (HPMP) Quality Improvement Organization Support Center, and is responsible for developing PEPPER. TMF subcontracted with IPRO, the New York-based Quality Improvement Organization (QIO), to conduct this training.

"Despite its potential to help with compliance and financial management practices, many hospitals underutilize PEPPER," says Kathy Terry, Ph.D., Senior Director, Medicare/Federal Health Care Assessment at IPRO. "Learning how to use PEPPER can seem difficult and our goal is to reduce the intimidation factor so that all appropriate hospitals in North Dakota can more easily access this innovative tool."

In the next few weeks, all acute-care PPS hospitals in the nation will receive a CD. The CD will contain a brief overview of the HPMP and PEPPER, a description and agenda for the training, a link to register for the training and a link to participate in an online community forum. The CD will also provide information on the targeted audiences within your hospital (e.g., Compliance Officers, Utilization and Health Information Management Professionals, etc) and how the data will be useful to each audience and to the hospital overall. The trainings will be web-based with audio accompaniment and will include a detailed review of the PEPPER report that is available to each acute-care PPS hospital.

"Our plan is to begin general PEPPER training sessions in late October, after the latest PEPPER data release from TMF," says Dr. Terry. "There will be many general trainings, which are scheduled to run through early January 2006."

Following the general training sessions, IPRO will offer three advanced sessions. The sessions will cover advanced PEPPER interpretation, a DRG/coding topic area in detail, and a utilization topic area in detail. On completion of the program, one of the general sessions and all three advanced training sessions will be made available to all acute care hospitals on CD.

Training will be conducted via a combination of webinar learning sessions and dissemination of print and/or audio-visual materials. General sessions will cover the history, intent, use, navigation, meaning and implications of PEPPER. Advanced webinar training will focus on more complex and specific issues and uses of PEPPER. Up to 200 hospitals will be able to participate in each of the sessions.

To reap the benefits of your hospital data, be sure to stay on the lookout for your PEPPER CD coming soon. More information may also be found at [www.pepperinfo.org](http://www.pepperinfo.org).