



SOUTH FLORIDA

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CHANGE CENTER ON AGING

Medicare: Part B covers cognitive screening as a service during the Annual Wellness Visit (AWV).<sup>6</sup> Sixty million Americans qualified for AWV in 2022 but only one-half of beneficiaries attended their AWV and less than one-third reported having a cognitive assessment.<sup>4</sup>

intervention.<sup>13</sup> There is substantial guidance for providers to refer patients if impairment is suspected at the AWV.<sup>14</sup>

**Allows for baseline evaluation.**

Absence of a baseline cognitive evaluation makes it difficult for physicians to properly identify cognitive impairment and leads to costly misdiagnoses.<sup>7</sup> Brief cognitive assessment allows for a baseline evaluation and more accurate diagnosis in the future.<sup>14</sup>

**Gives individuals time to plan.**

If irreversible impairment is suspected early through brief cognitive assessments (i.e., dementia), this allows individuals to be a part of their future by making their wishes known.

*Figure 2. Jacobson et al., 2020*

**COMPELLING RESEARCH**

Brief cognitive assessments are associated with benefits for people, their families, health care professionals, and the federal government.

**Reverse symptoms.**

Brief cognitive assessments can identify reversible causes of cognitive impairment. Some examples include vitamin B12 deficiency, medication interactions, and depression.<sup>7</sup>

**Opportunity for brain health conversations.**

Delirium and dementia are common causes of cognitive impairment<sup>8</sup> and 40% of cases are entirely preventable.<sup>9,10</sup> Administering brief cognitive assessment creates an opportunity for patient education on prevention of future cognitive impairment.

**Saves money and time.**

It is estimated that \$7 trillion could be saved if individuals are diagnosed with dementia early.<sup>11</sup> Brief cognitive assessments are shorter than comprehensive cognitive assessments and still detect aspects of cognitive functioning that require more evaluation.<sup>12</sup>

**Proper referral by Medicare.**

Early detection can lead to prompt referral to further neurological evaluation and

*Figure 3. ACL Administration; Alz Facts & Figures 2022*

**POLICY CONTEXT**

Medicare, Title XVIII of the Social Security Act, is administered through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) under the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Legislative oversight of Medicare is through the House Energy & Commerce Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. With the passing of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, sections of Medicare Part B were amended to cover an Annual Wellness Visit.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), providers are

A growing number of leading organizations support cognitive assessments during the AWV. Groups like the [American Academy of Family Physicians](#), [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#), and [Gerontological Society of America](#) have created toolkits to help healthcare providers administer brief cognitive assessments.

toward brief cognitive assessments during the AWV to illustrate easy adoption into clinical practice.

## **POLICY RECOMMEDATION**

Require brief cognitive assessments in the Annual Wellness Visit under Medicare: Part B

Administering brief cognitive assessments at the AWV can be easily implemented by practitioners with the widespread availability of screening tools.

## **REFERENCES**

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