

Radiation Oncologists Move Forward With Commercial Payer Bundles

21st Century Oncology, a group of for-profit radiation therapy centers, has been urging the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to move forward with using payment bundles to provide stability for radiation oncology reimbursement. The group recently reached an agreement with private insurer Humana Inc. to provide the first national reimbursement bundles for cancer treatments. The current model applies to radiation therapy cases for 13 specific diseases, including prostate, breast and lung cancers. 21st Century Oncology is also hoping to engage other commercial payers.

The agreement with Humana became effective August 1st, and Bill Barnes, Humana's vice president of national contracting, said in statement that, "Humana chose to partner with 21st Century Oncology in our continuing efforts to deliver quality, affordable health care. We also believe this partnership can improve administrative efficiencies with health care providers in Humana's national network." Because bundles are still an experimental payment type, Humana will allow refinement to the bundles.

21st Century Oncology reports that a payment bundle is based on the type of disease, which gives more flexibility to doctors to decide how to treat a patient. The bundle will cover an entire course of care for a patient, and the agreement could act as a model for future contracting based on condition, a spokesperson for 21st Century Oncology said. The goal is to have episode-based payments for all major cancers by the end of the project.

21st Century Oncology, Inc. is a leading developer and operator of radiation therapy centers. These centers, which are freestanding and hospital-based, provide a full spectrum of radiation therapy services to cancer patients. 21st Century Oncology currently operates 98 centers clustered into regional networks in Alabama, Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and West Virginia.