FOWLER ENTERS CMMI AMID RADIATION ONCOLOGY MODEL RE-WORK

Former Obama administration health staffer and Affordable Care Act architect Elizabeth Fowler officially took the helm of CMS’ powerful Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) on March 2nd.

One episode-based payment initiative under CMMI’s purview that Fowler will take over is the Radiation Oncology Alternative Payment Model (RO Model), which the Trump administration set up. The demonstration is slated to provide bundled payments for a 90-day episode of care to certain radiotherapy providers and suppliers furnishing radiotherapy for: anal cancer, bladder cancer, bone metastases, brain metastases, breast cancer, cervical cancer, CNS tumors, colorectal cancer, head and neck cancer, liver cancer, lung cancer, lymphoma, pancreatic cancer, prostate cancer, upper gastrointestinal cancer and uterine cancer.

Stakeholders had balked at the Trump administration’s initial plan for the RO Model, and lawmakers stepped in at the end of the year to mandate that it not start until January 2022.

The American Society for Radiation Oncology, American Association of Physicists in Medicine, American Brachytherapy Society, American Medical Association, Advanced Medical Technology Association and others sent CMS and CMMI officials a letter March 1st detailing changes they want to see to the RO Model prior to its implementation. These include smaller so-called discount factors or savings, guard rails to prevent payment shifts under the model, and a stepped approach to data collection and reporting requirements.

“Ultimately, we believe that the RO Model is overly focused on achieving significant savings, at the risk of hurting access to care and quality. We understand that the CMMI is developing a proposed rule, and we want to ensure that our common concerns are fully understood and considered for incorporation into the RO Model proposed rule,” the letter says.