

“WELCOME TO MEDICARE” EXAM FACT SHEET

- CMS added a benefit under Medicare Part B for an Initial Preventive Physical Examination as of 1/1/05.
- This benefit is called the “Welcome to Medicare” exam- a one-time preventive physical exam within 6 months of a beneficiary’s enrollment under Medicare Part B.
- The “Welcome to Medicare” exam must include the seven service elements:
 - Review of medical and social history
 - Review of potential for depression
 - Review of functional ability and level of safety, including **screening for hearing impairment and falls risk**
 - Height, weight, blood pressure, visual acuity
 - Electrocardiogram
 - Education, counseling, and referral based on the preceding results
 - Education, counseling, and referral, including a brief written plan, regarding screening and preventative services separately covered by Medicare
- The “Welcome to Medicare” exam must be provided by a physician or “qualified non-physician practitioner” (physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or clinical nurse specialist; not an audiologist).
- The final rule provides that **hearing and balance screening tests** are to be in the form of questions or questionnaires that must be recognized by a national medical professional organization.
- If the questions or questionnaire identify a hearing impairment or risk of falling, CMS acknowledges that additional services including counseling and referral may be warranted.
- Physicians or “qualified non-physician practitioners” will be reimbursed approximately \$124.30 utilizing the codes G0344 (exam) and G0366 (EKG) for the “Welcome to Medicare” exam.

Suggestions for screening questionnaires to be used for hearing impairment and falls risk:

Hearing:

- Hearing Handicap Inventory for the Elderly – Screening Version (HHIE-S): Ventry IM, Weinstein BE. (1982). The hearing handicap inventory for the elderly: A new tool. *Ear and Hearing* 3: 128-134.
- National Institute for Deafness and Communication Disorders (NIDCD) Screening Test
<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/10ways.asp>
- Hearing Health Quick Test available on the American Academy of Audiology web site
<http://www.audiology.org/consumer/guides/hhqt.php>

(The use of the whispered voice, tuning fork, finger-rub, ticking watch, or coin click tests by some physicians are not appropriate screening mechanisms.)

Falls Risk and Balance Assessment:

- Dizziness Handicap Inventory – Screening Version (DHI-S): Jacobson G, Calder J. (1998). A screening version of the Dizziness Handicap Inventory (DHI-S). *American Journal of Otology* 19(6): 804-808