It's Diabetes and Diabetic Eye Disease Month

By Shaun Meyer
Director of Home Health Services

Please join the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) this November during National Diabetes Month and Diabetic Eye Disease Month in raising awareness about diabetes, diabetic eye disease, the importance of early disease detection, and the related preventive health services covered by Medicare.

Diabetes can lead to severe complications such as heart disease, stroke, vision loss, kidney disease, nerve damage, and amputation among others, and it's a significant risk factor for developing glaucoma.

People with diabetes are more susceptible to many other illnesses such as pneumonia and influenza and are more likely to die from these than people who do not have diabetes.

Among U.S. residents aged 65 years and older, 10.9 million (or 26.9 percent) had diabetes in 2010. Currently, 3.6 million Americans age 40 and older suffer from diabetic eye disease.

Education and early detection are major components to combating this disease.

What Can You Do?

Help protect the health of your Medicare-covered patients by informing them that Medicare covers several diabetes-related preventive services for eligible beneficiaries including diabetes screening tests, diabetes self-management training, medical nutrition therapy, diabetes supplies, glaucoma screening, and vaccinations for pneumonia and influenza.

Advise them that the early detection and treatment of diabetes can prevent or delay many associated illnesses and complications.

Encourage utilization of these important preventive services as appropriate. And remember, many of these services require an order or referral for coverage by Medicare.

Please ensure that you provide your Medicare patients with the appropriate documentation so they can receive the services needed to help prevent, treat, and manage the disease.