



# Affordable Care Act: Prevention in Medicare

Prior to passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Medicare coverage for preventive services was not adequate to protect the older population from diseases that can be prevented or detected early. In most cases, we have the tools and technologies to provide these services, but too many Medicare beneficiaries did not know they existed or faced barriers to accessing them. For example, Medicare only covered cessation counseling for smokers who had health problems related to tobacco use, but not before they developed symptoms and may have had a greater desire to quit.

While preventive services such as colorectal cancer screening, mammograms, and flu shots were covered in Medicare, the out-of-pocket costs to patients created significant barriers to accessing these critical tools.

## Fast Facts

- Lung cancer accounts for close to one-fifth of all new cancer cases among people 65 and older.
- Lung cancer accounts for almost one-third of cancer deaths for people 65 and over, making it the most common cause of cancer-related death for this population.
- Lung cancer accounts for about 14% of all Medicare spending on cancer.
- If 80% of adults aged 50-64 were screened for colorectal cancer, Medicare could save \$15 billion.

## **Medicare coverage of preventive services is essential to improving the health and well-being of our nation's elderly population.**

### **Highlights of Medicare Prevention in the Affordable Care Act**

- The law waives co-pays and deductibles for all preventive services rated "A" or "B" by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPTF) for people in Medicare, and will cover a new annual wellness visit for all Medicare beneficiaries beginning in 2011.
- Beginning in 2011, the law waives the deductible for colorectal cancer screening tests, even when polyps are detected and removed.
- The law gives the Secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to review preventive services in Medicare and modify coverage.

### **Implications for the American Cancer Society and American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)**

- ACS CAN will continue to advocate for preventive cancer services in line with Society guidelines that are currently not rated an "A" or "B" by the USPSTF.
- ACS CAN will urge the HHS Secretary to consider preventive services shown to be effective at reducing cancer risk along with recommendations of the USPSTF.