

RAMP Recommends 10-Point Plan to Prevent Medicare Fraud in Power Wheelchair Claims; Power Wheelchair Industry Looks to Fight Fraud, Ensure Benefits for Disabled

April 28, 2004 - A coalition representing the **power wheelchair** industry today announced a 10- point plan designed to curtail Medicare fraud, while ensuring that their products remain accessible to senior citizens and Americans with disabilities.

RAMP, the Restore Access to Mobility Partnership, asserts that the 10-point plan would help the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) fight fraud without harming the people who require **power wheelchairs** to increase their mobility. It recommends establishing an accreditation process for suppliers, implementing a clear and clinically appropriate documentation process and appointing a fraud task force.

"We want to work together with CMS to curtail fraud and ensure that restrictive coverage policies do not stop seniors and Americans with disabilities from obtaining the medical equipment that can increase their quality of life," said Michael Hammes, chairman and CEO of Sunrise Medical.

Scott Meuser, CEO of Pride Mobility Products Corp., noted that CMS should work with the industry to avoid adopting restrictive coverage policies that deny access to medically necessary mobility products as a means to fight fraud. CMS adopted such a policy in December, which limited reimbursements to those who were completely chair and bed confined. After sharp criticism from groups representing the disabled and the industry, CMS later retracted the policy.

"Going forward we need a comprehensive plan that outlines coverage guidelines, but we also need a comprehensive plan for fighting fraud," Mr. Meuser said. "Currently, there are mechanisms available and by working with CMS to implement this plan, we can achieve both goals."

Specifically, RAMP recommended:

1. Fraud Task Force -- With industry assistance, organize a Special Task Force and Implementation Strategy to combat fraud and abuse. CMS, OIG, and the industry can work together to eliminate fraud. The industry would serve on the task force with CMS representatives.

2. Comprehensive Coverage Policy -- CMS should establish a clear national coverage policy for mobility products. This would establish national guidelines that would end confusion over coverage policy.

3. Provider/Supplier Accreditation -- Requirement for all Medicare/Medicaid mobility suppliers to be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting organization. This measure will improve the standards for suppliers.

4. Advanced Rehab Certification -- Requirement for a strict certification plan for medical suppliers who provide advanced rehab equipment for disabled pediatric and the severely disabled. This will help ensure that only qualified, certified individuals are responsible for the treatment of individuals with **severe disabilities**.

5. Medical Documentation Requirements -- Establish that a certificate of medical necessity (signed by a physician) with a corroborated state licensed Physical Therapist or Occupational Therapist evaluation is required documentation to establish non-ambulation and whether a **mobility** product (e.g.; **power wheelchair**) is medically necessary. This will provide clarity for providers and physicians as to the proper documentation requirements to establish medical necessity.

6. Advisory Group on Mobility Issues -- Appoint representatives from groups representing persons with disabilities, consumers and the industry to advise CMS on issues related to mobility questions. The group would be a sounding board for CMS, so that they could better gauge the impact of any new policies or guidelines.

7. New Code Development -- CMS should establish new codes for mobility equipment as the industry has recommended. There is such a vast range of technology that old codes need to be updated to adequately differentiate between the products.

8. Establish Advertising Best Practices -- Establish clear advertising regulations for the health care industry. This will help prevent non-compliance with Medicare Standards. Many other industries have advertising requirements and regulations, the **power wheelchair** industry can also accept them.

9. Fraud Reporting System -- We will work with CMS to establish an enhanced fraud and reporting system, which will help curtail fraud, as well as encourage people to report any irregularities.

10. Regulatory Reform -- Implement the Regulatory Reform procedures outlined in the Medicare Modernization Act that establish a clear procedure for reviewing medical claims and providers to determine compliance with established documentation requirements. It is essential that clarity in medical documentation be established to achieve efficient claim processing.

"This is an opportunity for CMS, the industry and representatives of disabled Americans to sit down and hammer out a plan that will limit fraud and abuse,"

said Mal Mixon, Chairman and CEO of Invacare Corp. "The industry is prepared to do its part. We want to clean up fraud and abuse just as much as the government does. By working together, we can achieve that goal without limiting access to **power wheelchairs** to the consumers that need them to improve their mobility."

The Restore Access to Mobility Partnership is a coalition of organizations and companies representing **power wheelchair** providers and manufacturers. Its members include: the American Association of Homecare; Invacare Corporation; the MED Group; Mobility Products Unlimited, LLC; Pride Mobility; The SCOOTER Store; and Sunrise Medical.