



## Appropriate Use Criteria: Creating Education for Health Care Professionals

The “Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014” (PAMA) establishes that health care professionals must consult appropriate use criteria (AUC) prior to referring a patient for an advanced diagnostic imaging test, such as nuclear imaging, computed tomography and magnetic resonance. For these ordering health care professionals, the probability is that they will need to consult AUC for a wide array of conditions and symptoms, ranging from back pain, headaches and suspected cardiovascular disease. In fact, in the calendar year 2016 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Proposed Rule, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) acknowledged that the number of clinicians affected by the program is “massive,” crossing almost every medical specialty and having a particular impact on primary care physicians since their scope of practice can be vast.

In September 2014, the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology (ASNC) commissioned a behavioral and performance needs assessment of inter-professional referrals and collaboration in nuclear imaging. The needs assessment found the following:

- almost half of referrers (or ordering professionals) report lack of knowledge of risks/benefits of nuclear imaging agents, which prevents referrers from providing patients comparative risk/benefit information when selecting the most appropriate imaging test;
- referrers are challenged to apply AUC when selecting patients for nuclear imaging; and
- roughly one-third of referrals come from non-cardiology providers who are likely most limited in their knowledge of nuclear imaging.

The results of the needs assessment led ASNC and its partners to embark on an extensive educational initiative. However, these activities are not adequate to ensure success of the Medicare AUC Program for nuclear cardiovascular imaging.

ASNC strongly supports the use of AUC. Rapid uptake and proper application of AUC for clinical decision-making requires a commitment of federal resources. Section 218 (b) of the PAMA does not explicitly require or dedicate resources to educational efforts directed at ordering health care professionals — resources that are needed to help increase the capacity of ordering health care professionals to consult and correctly apply AUC for advanced imaging tests.

ASNC asks Congress to support, including through the allocation of funding, research to study knowledge gaps about AUC and its application, as well as to develop educational and informational tools, including informational components that can be directly integrated in clinical decision support mechanisms used for consulting AUC.

**REQUEST TO CONGRESS** — Include language in the report to accompany the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Fiscal Year 2017 Appropriations Bill.

**Appropriate Use Criteria Education** — The “Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014” established an Appropriate Use Criteria (AUC) Program for advanced diagnostic imaging services provided to Medicare beneficiaries. The program requires physicians and other health care professionals who order an advanced diagnostic imaging test to consult with AUC using a qualified clinical decision support mechanism. The Committee notes success of the Program requires that ordering health care professionals have an understanding, with a high level of acuity, how to apply AUC when choosing a diagnostic test; therefore the Secretary is encouraged to direct existing resources and foster collaboration across the Department to research knowledge gaps in AUC, develop educational and informational tools for AUC adherence, and to include educational information as a function of clinical decision support mechanisms used for consulting AUC under the Program.