



## **PEPPER Supports Efforts to Assess RUG Assignment, Patient Care**

Mid South Rehab, a contract therapy company for post-acute care providers in Mississippi, has been using PEPPER to enhance patient care and support its close work with skilled nursing facilities (SNFs), for which they provide therapy services.

The Program for Evaluating Payment Patterns Electronic Report (PEPPER) is an annual comparative data report that summarizes a provider's Medicare claims data statistics for areas prone to abuse/improper Medicare payments.

Charlean Williams, the compliance officer at Mid South Rehab, said she has used PEPPER for over two years, primarily as an educational tool to help SNFs assess appropriate resource utilization group (RUG) assignment and progression of a patient's care. She focuses on RUG assignment, length of stay and how the provider compares to other organizations. She said the goal of Mid South Rehab is to ensure that the therapy services meet the needs of the patient and are appropriate.

"We receive the PEPPER from our strategic partners (SNFs) to collect data on performance," Ms. Williams said. "This allows us to see averages of like facilities and evaluate our performance in relationship to those numbers."

She said that targeted audits are initiated when indicated.

"Being an outlier does not mean the provider is doing anything wrong. An audit confirms whether any issues exist," she said.

Being a therapy provider, Ms. Williams notes that they have very close working relationships with the SNFs. She reviews the PEPPER with them and they discuss any next steps. She's found some SNFs are unaware of PEPPER, however, after educating them on what the PEPPER is and how it can be obtained, SNFs are on-board and ready to use their PEPPER.

Ms. Williams' advice to someone new to PEPPER: "Take the time to review it with the minimum data set (MDS) nurse and administrator." She added that the PEPPER is well laid-out, easy to use and contains great information.

For more on PEPPER, visit [PEPPERresources.org](https://pepperresources.org).

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