

### Bone Densitometry Testing

Osteoporosis is a disease of the bone that makes a person's bones weak and more likely to break. Fortunately, osteoporosis is preventable and manageable with the right tools. The key to managing the disease well is early detection and a bone density test is the only test that can diagnose osteoporosis before a broken bone occurs. Of the three different types of bone density testing, dual energy x-ray absorptiometry, or DXA, is considered the most effective at measuring bone density.

The National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF) recommends that post-menopausal women and men over the age of 50 receive a bone density test with DXA on the hip and the spine. In those with osteoporosis, the hip and spine are most likely to be broken due to the wear and tear on these areas of the body. Additionally, a fracture in either of these locations can lead to greater problems including a longer recovery time, greater pain, disability, and death.

#### Current Medicare Policies on DXA Scans

Congress cut DXA reimbursement under Medicare Part B in 2007 (along with Medicare payment for other imaging services) as part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. Further cuts have been implemented by Medicare to reduce the physician component for interpretation of the scan results. Between 2007 and 2011, DXA reimbursement in a non-facility setting dropped 63%, well below the cost of providing the tests. With the passage of the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, DXA reimbursement was increased to 70% of the 2006 fee schedule but that boost only lasted for two years and Congress has not increased reimbursement for this service.

#### **Numbers:**

- *Change in osteoporosis diagnoses since 2009 – -21.5%*
- *Change in women receiving a DXA scan since 2008 – -3,680,948*
- *Change in number of hip fractures due to reduced screening – +43,661*
- *Change in hip fracture related deaths since 2008 – +9,518*
- *Additional cost to Medicare to treat hip fractures alone – \$1.8 billion.*

#### Implications of Current Policy to Medicare Program

Due to the low reimbursement levels for DXA scans, physician practices are unable to provide this service to their patients, having to refer them to hospital locations that are able to offer the service due to higher reimbursement. This causes unnecessary delays to testing which lead to higher costs to the Medicare program.

#### AAOE Recommends

Pass HR 1898 to increase reimbursement for DXA scans performed in a physician office.