

Report on Medicare Compliance Volume 31, Number 21. June 13, 2022 CMS Fines Two Hospitals for Price Transparency Noncompliance; Warnings Went Unheeded

By Nina Youngstrom

After apparently ignoring warnings from CMS in April about their noncompliance with price transparency requirements, two Georgia hospitals have been hit with civil monetary penalties.^[1] They are the first hospitals to face fines under CMS's 2020 price transparency regulation.^[2]

In June 7 letters, CMS notified Northside Hospital Atlanta of its \$883,180 fine^[3] and Northside Hospital Cherokee of its \$214,320 fine.^[4] CMS had reviewed their websites and said it "became apparent" the hospitals had not come into compliance. "Your hospital was provided the opportunity to respond and provide supporting documentation to CMS regarding cited violations; it did not," CMS said.

During the months between the "warning notices" and the fines, when the hospitals had time to submit corrective action plans, they instead "intentionally removed all previously posted pricing files," CMS said. Northside Hospital Atlanta also acknowledged "that potential patients were to 'request specific price estimate quotes by either calling the Price Estimate line at 404-851-8694 or sending a simple email to Price.Estimate@northside.com,' and asserted that '...Northside's price estimation process is the best method for providing patients with a good faith estimate of what they should expect to pay out of pocket.' Such price estimation method does not comply with the regulatory requirements to make hospital charge information public electronically via the internet or internet-based tool," CMS said.

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