

Feds penalize Reno hospitals

By Bill Theobald, Reno Gazette-Journal

WASHINGTON — Six Reno-area hospitals are among 20 Nevada hospitals that will lose some federal funding this year because too many of their elderly Medicare patients were readmitted within 30 days of being discharged.

This is the third year for the penalty program, which was created as part of the Affordable Care Act with the intent of spurring hospitals to pay more attention to what happens to patients after they leave. That's leading some hospitals around the country to create more active plans for patients once they leave the hospital, such as requiring a follow up with a medical professional.

Meanwhile, hospitals can financially benefit from patients returning for more care. Roughly 2 million patients return a year, costing Medicare about \$26 billion. Of that total, officials estimate \$17 billion goes for readmissions that could have been avoided.

To help curb that practice, Medicare is fining a record number of hospitals this year — 2,610 — by withholding a percentage of their reimbursements for treating Medicare patients.

Read the whole story