

From Around the Network

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Philips Respironics' ComfortFusion™ nasal mask

New Products

ComfortFusion™ (left) nasal mask features a FitPack™ that comes with either a small or medium cushion. Philips Respironics, www.respironics.com

Zest™ nasal mask features the Easy-Clip Silicone Seal for one-step removal. Fisher & Paykel Healthcare, Inc., www.fphcare.com

Acquisitions

GE Healthcare acquired Vital Signs, Inc. (that had acquired BREAS) and VersaMed in 2008. www.gehealthcare/respiratory

Networking

PatientsLikeMe.com is a website dedicated to making a difference in the lives of people diagnosed with life-changing conditions, such as ALS, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and fibromyalgia, to give individuals the power to control their disease and to share what they learn with others. It is organized by Patients, Treatments, Symptoms and Research. Go to www.patientslikeme.com, click on "Treatments," then click on "Non-invasive Ventilator" to read some interesting contributions about ventilator use.

Respiratory Therapy Services

In an attempt to improve patient access to and Medicare reimbursement for respiratory therapists, the Medicare Respiratory Therapy Initiative Act of 2009 was introduced recently in the US Congress. The Act will amend Title XVIII of the Social Security Act so that Medicare can reimburse for "the services of a qualified respiratory therapist performed under the general supervision of a physician" outside the hospital setting, including doctor's office, outpatient clinic and an individual's home. The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) is chief advocate for the initiative, www.aarc.org.

Reimbursement for ventilators in USA

Competitive bidding, the program devised by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) to hold down costs of certain durable medical equipment (DME) items, including bilevel ventilators and CPAP units, was delayed by an act of Congress. Known as The Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) of 2008, the act delayed implementation of Round 1 in order for CMS to improve the collection of financial documentation from suppliers and other aspects of the process. The Round 1 rebid competition begins in 2009. The MIPPA also required all durable medical equipment suppliers to meet quality standards for Medicare accreditation by September 30, 2009. www.cms.hhs.gov/medicareprovidersupenroll

There have been some reports from ventilator users who are being told by home healthcare/DME suppliers that the suppliers are not maintaining a large stockpile of ventilators due to the outlay for the ventilators and the low reimbursement costs. Some suppliers are limiting their service areas to ventilator users. Other ventilator users are reporting that Medicare is denying the second ventilator. Please contact info@ventusers.org if you are experiencing problems in reimbursement or servicing. ▲