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TO: FHCP PCP'S

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SUBJECT: WELLNESS

Wellness is more than just the latest buzzword in health care. More and more employer groups are looking for health care that will focus on keeping their employees well, rather than simply treating them when they get sick. Similarly, Medicare is focusing on whether or not physicians address wellness with their patients during office visits.

Medicare sends questionnaires to Medicare members on a random basis. One of the questions asked is: "In the past 12 months, did you talk with a doctor or other health provider about your level of exercise or physical activity?" FHCP is given a ranking based on the pooled responses, and currently our ranking for this measure is only 2 stars out of 5. This new "star" system which Medicare is implementing will increase in importance over time, and in the next few years will play a significant role in determining Medicare payments to health care plans (including FHCP).

If you're not already doing so, please incorporate a brief discussion about physical activity into your patient encounters, especially with older adult patients. This can be as simple as a single question asking your patient if they take daily walks for exercise (and encouraging them to do so if the answer is no). It need not be anything that takes up more than a few seconds of your time. Patient's appreciate your interest in their well-being, and encouraging patients to get more physical activity may be one of the most effective measures we, as physicians, can take to promote good health.

As always, FHCP appreciates your efforts on behalf of your patients.