



**Silver State ACO**  
Accountable Care Organization

Powered by The Valley Health System and Kindred Hospitals



March 2024

# Newsletter

Volume 105

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#VegasStrong



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## SILVER STATE ACO CELEBRATES TEN YEARS

On Tuesday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, Participant Providers, Preferred Providers, Hospitalists, Silver State ACO Shareholders, Management and Board of Directors, came together to celebrate ten years of Silver State ACO’s success. Having earned Shared Savings for *eight consecutive years* and saving the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) over \$232,500,000, Silver State ACO maintains its position as one of the most effective and successful Accountable Care Organizations in the history of the CMS Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP).

Hosted in the CapitalOne lounge at Allegiant Stadium, attendees were treated to dinner, music and the ability to walk out to the stadium which had, just days earlier, hosted the Super Bowl. Tours of the “back of the house” were also available.



Silver State ACO Board members and Management at the Allegiant Stadium event. Back row, from left: Dr. William Resh, Dr. Benito Calderon, Dr. Robert Chiascione, Dr. William Shoemaker, Keenan Underwood (CFO), Dr. Samuel E. Green, Dr. Thomas Peters, Dr. John Onyema, Larry Preston (CEO). Front row, seated, from left: Dr. Lawrence Allen, Dr. Ertha Nanton, Karla Perez (Valley Health System), Linn Billingsley (Kindred / Scion), Dr. Leslie Jacobs (CMO), Rhonda Hamilton (COO). See more photos of the event on page 9.

**NOTE:**

Next Practice Meeting:  
Southern Nevada  
Wednesday, May 1, 2024

Northern Nevada:  
Thursday, May 2, 2024

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Welcome Spring

It was an evening of celebration and networking and was, itself, a



SSACO Ice sculpture

great success. The event afforded the many different, distinct elements and people of SSACO the opportunity to meet in a comfortable, relaxed setting. Over 200 people attended and, by the smiles on their faces, one could know that they enjoyed!

Thanks to all who came to celebrate with us.

### PREFERRED PROVIDERS FOR INPATIENT SERVICES

Silver State ACO Preferred Providers are carefully selected to ensure that they share Silver State ACO’s focus on excellent patient outcomes even while reducing costs. The Valley Health System is the Silver State ACO preferred provider for acute, inpatient stays in Southern Nevada. Northern Nevada Health System is the preferred provider for acute, inpatient stays in Northern Nevada.

By definition, SSACO beneficiaries remain traditional, fee-for-service Medicare patients who maintain their right to see – or use - any provider they choose. Yet, CMS encourages ACOs to contract with specific providers and facilities as preferred providers. Why? Because CMS understands that a patient’s physician, particularly his/her Primary Care Physician, can have great influence on his/her behavior.

Ultimately, it is in everyone’s best interest to have Silver State ACO beneficiaries stay within the SSACO Preferred Provider network. Please be sure to check the most recent network listing when referring patients to a specialist or to an acute facility. Providers should do their best to tell their patients about the importance of staying in network .

If a patient asks for a listing of preferred providers, feel free to share it or to direct the patient to the Silver State ACO website ([www.silverstateaco.com](http://www.silverstateaco.com)). The network listing is found under the “Associates” tab on the right.

The list is updated from time to time, as changes are made. Sometimes providers or facilities are dropped, sometimes there are additions (such as one to be found later in this newsletter). Whenever



The Valley Health System™

Centennial Hills Hospital • Desert Springs Hospital • Henderson Hospital (2016)  
Spring Valley Hospital • Summerlin Hospital • Valley Hospital

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there are changes, an updated Preferred Provider list is emailed to each practice. It's worthwhile to check the website from time to time to confirm that the clinic is using the current list.

Please be sure to have all providers mention to their patients that the Valley Health System facilities (Centennial, Henderson, Spring Valley, Summerlin, Valley) and Northern Nevada Health System facilities (Northern Nevada Medical Center, Northern Nevada Sierra Medical Center) are the preferred hospitals which they should use whenever safe and possible. In addition to providing excellent patient treatment, using these facilities aids in the continuum of care, contributing to a smoother, more coordinated transfer to home or to a post-acute setting. Staying within the network also helps the provider and/or Silver State ACO care coordination team to follow up efficiently.

Maps and information about the various hospitals and clinics within each of the systems is attached to this newsletter's email. NOTE: The map of Southern Nevada facilities will be updated when the new, WEST HENDERSON HOSPITAL opens soon.

## QUALITY MEASURES SPOTLIGHT

### 2024 Medicare CQMs

As discussed in February's newsletter, Silver State ACO is responsible for reporting quality on behalf of our participating practices. We report quality to Medicare in several ways:

➤ CMS Web Interface Measures –

These are manually audited by SSACO Quality Coordinators and pertain to ACO attributed Medicare Fee-For-Service patients only. Specifications were reviewed in detail in last month's newsletter. 2024 is the last year ACOs will be permitted to submit CMS Web Interface Measures.

➤ Medicare Clinical Quality Measures (Medicare CQM)

These are electronic based measures that are populated and pulled directly from each clinic's Electronic Health Record and uploaded via a QRDA Category 1 file. Medicare is allowing ACOs to submit this data for Medicare patients only, starting in 2024. In previous years, information was reported on all patients and all payers.

➤ Claims – Two measures are required to be reported via claims. These are:

- Hospital-Wide, 30-day, All-Cause Unplanned Readmission



## SPOTLIGHT

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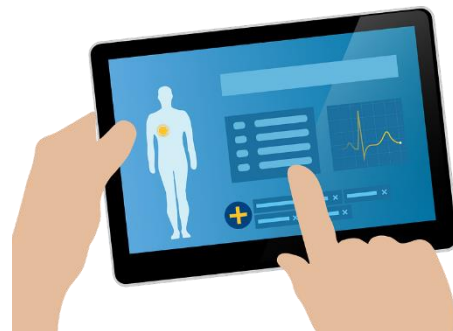


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- Risk-Standardized Hospital Admission Rates for patients with Multiple Chronic Conditions

➤ Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) Survey – A survey that covers multiple topics including but not limited to: Timely Care, Provider Communication, Shared Decision Making, Helpful Office Staff and Care Coordination.

We would like to take this opportunity to re-introduce the required Medicare CQMs. While the specifications remain the same, each EMR has its own way of documenting these measures in a designated field in order to meet the intent of the measure. We recommend practices reach out to their EMR company liaison for a complete understanding of what workflows need to be implemented.



➤ Diabetes: Hemoglobin A1c Poor Control: Patients aged 18–75 with diabetes must have an HbA1c completed during 2024. Medicare considers HbA1c “controlled” if it is less than or equal to 9.0%. Medicare requires the ACO to report the last HbA1c reading completed in 2024.

➤ Screening for Depression and Follow-Up Plan: A screening for depression should occur in all patients aged 12 and older, using an age-appropriate standardized depression-screening tool AND, if positive, a follow-up plan is required to be documented within the patient chart on the date of the screening or up to two days

following the date of the encounter. A follow-up plan must include one or more of the following:

- Referral to a provider for additional evaluation and assessment
- Pharmacological interventions
- Other interventions or follow-up for the diagnosis or treatment of depression



➤ Controlling High Blood Pressure: This measure includes patients 18–85 years of age who have a diagnosis of hypertension and whose blood pressure was adequately controlled. Medicare defines “adequately controlled” as less than, or equal to 139/89 mmHg. Medicare requires the ACO to report the last blood pressure reading taken in 2024.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to your Quality Coordinator if you require any assistance or have questions on any of these measures.

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## ATTENTION: ALLEGED DME FRAUD SCHEME UNCOVERED

In early February, it was reported that the National Association of ACOs (NAACOS) had uncovered an alleged fraud scheme that could cost Medicare billions of dollars.

NAACOS noticed a massive spike in Medicare claims for catheters. Catheters are generally low-cost items and, therefore, may not be carefully scrutinized when ordered. However, when there were over 400,000 *additional* claims for catheters over two years, the overall cost soared.

NAACOS was alarmed when it noticed a substantial increase in DME (durable medical equipment) expense, which is included in an ACO's total cost. It is of great concern because this cost is part of the equation used to calculate Shared Savings. The catheters were apparently ordered using patient names and MBIs without their knowledge. Various government agencies are investigating the fraud as well as how the names and MBIs were acquired.



Silver State ACO is sharing this information to advise Participant Practices to be alert to any unusual claims or requests for DME, particularly catheters. Patients should be made aware of this, as well. Providers should warn patients about possible fraud by discussing it or posting a notice. If patients receive items that they did not order (or that they don't think their doctor ordered on their behalf), or if they receive an EOB for something they didn't order or did not receive, they should notify Medicare – and the clinic – immediately.

## ENCRYPTION

Emails are a quick and easy way to communicate electronically, but they are not necessarily *secure*. Encrypted emails are a secure means to send emails.

What are Encrypted Emails? They are emails that are electronically converted from readable plain text into scrambled cipher text. Only the recipient who has the private key that matches the public key, used to encrypt the message, can decipher the message for reading.



Some services exist that encrypt emails in transit but they may not have the required level of security to make the messages HIPAA compliant. To make email HIPAA compliant, the system or service must have end-to-end encryption, which encrypts messages both in transit

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and when stored. Proper encryption controls ensure that only the intended recipient and authorized personnel can access the messages.

Why do staff involved in healthcare need to encrypt emails to be HIPAA compliant?

Encrypted emails must be HIPAA compliant because when an unencrypted email is sent, the email is transmitted from the sender's



mail server to the recipient's mail server in plain text, via SMPT (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol). It then "rests" in plain text until the recipient opens the email client. This is like sending a letter with the content of the letter written on the outside of the envelope.

Anybody can intercept the email in transit, or while it is at rest, and read it.

*Best practices for Encrypted Emails:*

Some email service providers require individual emails to be encrypted by clicking a button or using a portal. Since it is easy to forget to turn on encryption and accidentally send an unencrypted email, it is a better choice to encrypt *all* emails, not only those that contain ePHI, using "zero-step" encryption,. This will reduce the potential for human error.

Anyone can encrypt his/her emails at home, too. Some suggestions on how to do so can be found: [here](#).

## NEW PREFERRED PROVIDER: RHEUMATOLOGY

Silver State ACO is pleased to announce an addition to our Preferred Provider network in Southern Nevada: Board certified Rheumatologist, Dr. Dodji Modjinou.

Dr. Modjinou has been practicing in the Las Vegas and Henderson communities since 2016, after completing a Fellowship at New York University / Hospital for Joint Diseases in New York City in 2014.

Dr. Dodji, as he is affectionately known by friends and colleagues, is a native of Togo, West Africa. His practice focuses on patients with rheumatoid, osteo and psoriatic arthritis, lupus, ankylosing spondylitis, gout, Sjogren's Syndrome, vasculitis, as well as other rheumatoid conditions.

Dr. Dodji sees patients only by referral from a PCP or other specialists. He and/or his office staff can communicate in English, French, Spanish and various West African dialects.

Dr. Dodji's office is located at 861 Coronado Center Drive, Suite 220, Henderson, NV 89052 and can be reached at 702-984-3776. Additional

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information is available on the practice website:  
[www.advancedrheumatologynv.com](http://www.advancedrheumatologynv.com).

## PROVIDER MANUAL

Earlier this month, the Silver State ACO 2024 Provider Manual was emailed to each Participant Practice. As the Manual is an extremely large file, it was broken down into five individual sections, each emailed separately.



The Provider Manual contains information on each of the services, protocols and systems used by Silver State ACO, as well as additional useful information and hints on best practices, CMS requirements, and billing detail. It is a valuable reference guide. Please be sure to check that you have received all sections.

Also, remember that much of the same information is available on our website, [www.silverstateaco.com](http://www.silverstateaco.com), which is updated frequently.

## PRACTICE MEETINGS

Practice meetings were held on February 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> for Southern Nevada and Northern Nevada practices, respectively. There was standing room only at each of the meetings. Representatives of practices that have been with SSACO for some time joined as they understand the benefits of attendance; new practices were eager to learn more about Silver State ACO.



At the February 8th Practice meeting in Northern Nevada. From left: Dineen Cassidy (Quality Coordinator), Ryan Patton (Carson Tahoe Medical Group), Molly Golden (B. Bottenberg DO Professional Corp), Peter Adlish (Sierra Nevada Family Medicine) Teri Kelly (Reno Family Physicians), Savannah Rittenhouse (SSACO Quality Coordinator), Richelle Heater (SSACO Quality Coordinator)

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Please be sure to join us at each of the remaining meetings in 2024. They are a great opportunity to meet other SSACO Participant practices; to learn about new CMS directives, rules and regulations; and a great chance to ask questions and / or get clarification on issues that may be affecting many practices.



**SOUTHERN NEVADA**

*Wednesday, May 1, 2024*

*Wednesday, July 31, 2024*

*Wednesday, November 6, 2024*

All Southern Nevada Practice meetings will be held at Summerlin Hospital and begin at 11:30 a.m. Lunch is served.

**NORTHERN NEVADA**

*Thursday, May 2, 2024*

*Thursday, August 1, 2024*

*Thursday, November 7, 2024*

All Northern Nevada Practice Meetings will be held at Northern Nevada Sparks Medical Building, Suite 201. Meet & Greet begins at 5 pm; Meeting begins at 5:30.



Dr. Alison Netski, Vice Dean of Clinical Affairs for UNLV Health, making a presentation about the available resources through UNLV Health, at the Southern Nevada practice meeting.

**REMINDERS:**

CMS requires that every ACO participant practice display a notification poster in any office or clinic where patients are seen. Silver State ACO delivers these posters to new practices when they join.

The poster must contain the exact language set forth in templates created by CMS. For 2024, CMS has not changed the verbiage nor the requirement to display the poster. Please be sure that your poster is readable and prominently displayed.

Templates for the poster, and the beneficiary notice which must be delivered to SSACO beneficiaries, are available in the Provider Manual. Included are an explanation of each of the notices, along with requirements for distribution.



## SILVER STATE ACO Compliance Line:

**702-751-0834**

Available for secure reporting of any suspected compliance issues, without fear of retribution.

### March Ahead

If you'd like to be entered to win a prize at the next practice meeting, respond to the email to which this newsletter was attached with the words "MARCH AHEAD" in the subject line.



The team from Nevada Cardiology Associates



Linn Billingsley (Kindred / Scion), Larry Preston (CEO), Karla Perez (Valley Health System)

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Left: ARKOS HEALTH  
Larry Preston (SSACO  
CEO) with, from left,  
Krista Huey, Amanda  
North-Shea and Tarra  
Cortez

Right:  
JATEKO  
FAMILY  
PRACTICE:  
Ava Jacobs  
(left), Dr.  
Jeaniene  
Talley (right)  
with Jessica  
Shepard  
(SSACO  
Director of  
Quality)



Left:



Platinum Hospitalists

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