



## NEWS RELEASE

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### \$1 Million Diabetes Education Grant Awarded to LHCR

#### *African-American Medicare Patients to Benefit*

Baton Rouge, LA - October 20, 2009 - Louisiana Health Care Review (LHCR), the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Louisiana, has been awarded \$1 million by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The grant will fund a special study, "Limb Preservation After Katrina" (LiPAK), designed to reduce the high rate of amputations among African-Americans with diabetes.

This two-year LiPAK special study is the only program of its kind in the country. Through LiPAK, free diabetes education that focuses on limb preservation will be provided to Medicare beneficiaries living in Orleans and Jefferson parishes.

LiPAK is designed to enhance the current "Every Diabetic Counts" (EDC) program, which provides free nutritional and health education to African-American diabetic Medicare patients in five parishes in Louisiana including Orleans.

Participants in LiPAK will receive additional health education focused on lifestyle changes and other actions they can take to avoid medical conditions that lead to amputation. They will also receive additional materials and follow-up support from health care experts throughout the two-year program.

The amputation rate for all Medicare beneficiaries in Louisiana is 1.66 per 1000, which is the highest in the nation. For African-American Medicare beneficiaries, the rate is far higher. In the New Orleans and Metairie Hospital Referral Regions,<sup>1</sup> the amputation rate is as high as 5.8 per 1000. Since Hurricane Katrina, resources available to elderly African-American Medicare beneficiaries have been reduced. The result is these individuals now face an even greater risk of severe complications from diabetes.

"Medicare has a continued concern about the Greater New Orleans area and its Medicare beneficiaries' ability to access the full scope of resources in a health care infrastructure so badly damaged four years ago. The funding of the LiPAK program is a meaningful and exciting program for our community," said Scott Flowers, LHCR Director of Quality Improvement.

"The needs of African-American diabetics living in post-Katrina New Orleans are not going unrecognized by the CMS and LHCR," said Gary Curtis, LHCR President & CEO. "We are committed to using disease management techniques to protect patients who are at risk for losing a limb. This not only improves beneficiaries' independence and mobility, it increases each person's life-long health status and ability to participate in repairing and rebuilding their homes and community."

If you or someone you know is interested in the LiPAK program, please call LiPAK Program Director Linda Harkey at (225) 926-6353 or visit [www.lhcrmedicare.org](http://www.lhcrmedicare.org). Registration is scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. It is open to African-American Medicare beneficiaries suffering from diabetes and residing in Orleans or Jefferson parishes.

IHRR (Hospital Referral Region), source: Dartmouth Atlas Project, Louisiana Health Care Review Environmental Scan: 2008, LSU Public Policy Research Institute

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