



Highlights of [GAO-06-63](#), a report to congressional committees

MEDICARE AND MEDICAID COVERAGE

Therapies and Supplies for Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Why GAO Did This Study

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) affects an estimated one million Americans. IBD patients often have difficulty digesting food. As a result, they may require parenteral nutrition (intravenous feeding) or enteral nutrition (tube feeding), medically necessary food products to supplement their diets, and medications. In addition, some IBD patients must care for their ostomies—surgically created openings for the discharge of digested food.

IBD advocates have recently expressed concerns regarding the ability of IBD patients to obtain the health care they need. The Research Review Act of 2004 directed GAO to study the Medicare and Medicaid coverage standards for individuals with IBD, in both home health and outpatient delivery settings. GAO (1) identified the Medicare and Medicaid coverage standards for five key therapies used for the treatment of IBD and (2) determined what specific supplies used in these therapies Medicare and Medicaid programs will pay for. In this work, GAO examined Medicare’s national and local coverage policies and conducted a survey of Medicaid programs in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-63.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Leslie G. Aronovitz, at (312) 220-7600 or aronovitzl@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

Medicare generally provides coverage for parenteral and enteral nutrition and ostomy supplies in both home health and outpatient delivery settings. However, specific standards regarding medical conditions and appropriate documentation must be met for parenteral and enteral nutrition to be covered. Medicare has one coverage standard governing the provision of ostomy supplies—that beneficiaries receiving these items have had an ostomy. Medicare does not cover medically necessary food products and generally does not cover self-administered drugs, which include most drugs taken by IBD patients. However, medically necessary drugs, including those that are self-administered, will be covered by Medicare’s voluntary prescription drug benefit, which becomes effective in January 2006. State Medicaid programs reported covering, at least partially, each of the five therapies. The survey indicated that most states’ Medicaid coverage standards are generally comparable to Medicare’s coverage for parenteral and enteral nutrition and ostomy care.

State Medicaid Programs That Reported Coverage of Five IBD Therapies for Adults and Children

	Parenteral nutrition	Enteral nutrition	Ostomy care	Medically necessary food products	Drugs ^a
Adults and children	50	49	51	40	50
Adults only	0	0	0	0	1
Children only	1	1	0	6	0
Not covered	0	1	0	5	0
Total	51	51	51	51	51

Source: GAO survey of state Medicaid programs.

Note: For purposes of this report, the District of Columbia is considered a state.

^aFor this analysis, GAO is defining states’ coverage of drugs to treat IBD as states’ coverage of at least one of the brand name drugs or generic drugs listed in GAO’s survey.

Once Medicare coverage standards are met, the program will generally cover all medically necessary supplies associated with parenteral and enteral nutrition and ostomy care. The survey of state Medicaid programs showed variation in the specific supplies that states will provide. While many states pay for most supplies associated with parenteral and enteral nutrition, the specific ostomy supplies states cover vary. Most states—46—reported covering at least some medically necessary food products. GAO also found that states generally cover the drugs listed in the survey.

CMS said that GAO correctly described its Medicare coverage policies and suggested that we clarify our description of Medicare’s coverage policy for prescription drugs that are not self-administered. It also said that it will continue to consider access issues for Medicare and Medicaid IBD patients.