

A Contrast in Beneficiary Experience

Medicare Managed Care's Ability to Support Chronically Ill Beneficiaries

"The special needs I have with my health mean that I have to have some help getting the services I need. Without my care manager, I would be lost. I'm so glad I have someone to talk to who can help me."

— O. Mercer, South Carolina Care Improvement Plus Member

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The healthcare costs of the chronically ill continue to increase under fee-for-service (FFS) Medicare. As the Congressional Budget Office has observed, the current FFS system is reactive, generally waiting for an acute event such as a hospitalization before engaging healthcare providers. Medicare managed care plans, or "coordinated care plans," represent a practical alternative, providing care coordination, access to medical homes, and chronic care management services aimed at reducing wasteful spending and improving quality of care.

One beneficiary's story¹

The following profile contrasts the experience of a chronically ill Medicare beneficiary in a Medicare "coordinated care plan" with the same member's likely experience in FFS Medicare.



Angela Garcia, 75, struggles with the ongoing management of her diabetes and heart failure. On a daily basis, she has to keep track of over eight medications, and without family members close by to provide transportation, she has difficulty keeping her doctor appointments. Ms. Garcia has a primary care doctor that has been helping to manage her conditions. Last December, Ms. Garcia woke up in intense pain due to a wound that had recently developed on her left foot which was becoming infected. At the urging of her doctor's office, she took an ambulance to the emergency room where she was visited by a Hospitalist Primary Care Physician (PCP), diagnosed with an infection, and admitted to have her infection treated.

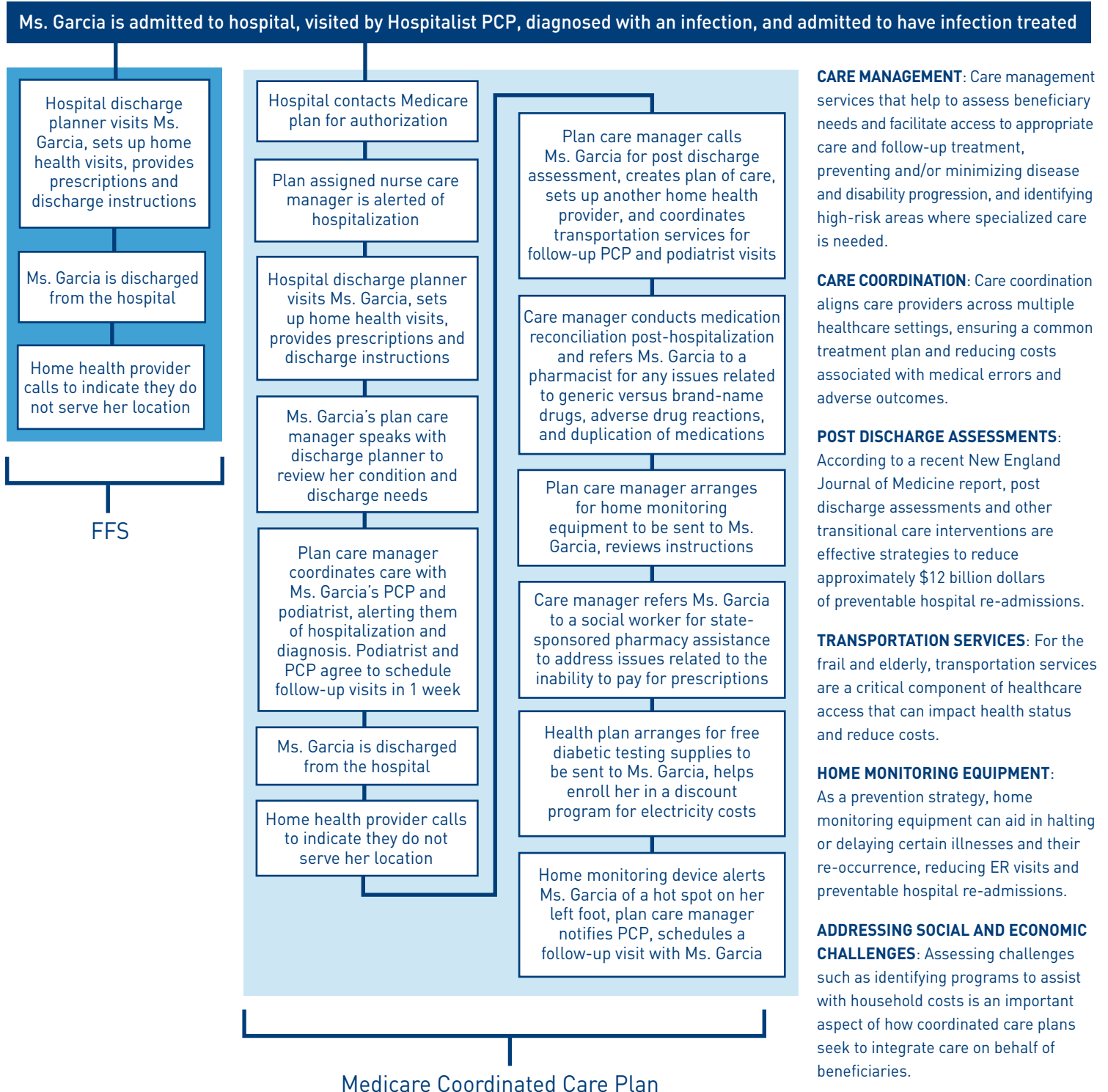
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¹ Based on actual events. Identifying information has been changed to protect privacy.

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The following table illustrates the likely services and follow-up that Ms. Garcia would experience under the current Medicare FFS program, contrasted with her experience as a member of a Medicare coordinated care plan (a Special Needs Plan in this instance):¹



¹ Based on actual events. Identifying information has been changed to protect privacy.