

CareMount Medical  
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## CareMount inks preferred provider agreement for hospice care

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CareMount Medical has entered into a preferred provider agreement with Hudson Valley Hospice.

As a result, the organizations said, they have implemented new referral and communications policies aimed at improving care coordination for CareMount patients receiving palliative and hospice care.

The agreement marks CareMount's first with a hospice provider. It is part of the medical group's broader strategy to integrate care delivery around its independent physicians.

Since it launched its Medicare Next Generation Accountable Care Organization in 2018, CareMount has added preferred providers in a range of other settings to facilitate warm handoffs of patients, said Alicia Beardsley, senior director of Population Health Initiatives at CareMount.

Those have included the acute inpatient hospital, skilled nursing facility and home care settings. The preferred providers coordinate care for CareMount's primary care patients under Medicare and commercial payer risk-based contracts. They partner with the medical group to improve the quality of care and patient outcomes.

The agreement with Hudson Valley Hospice lets patients know that CareMount is "thinking about the entire trajectory of their care," said Dr. Caroline DeFilippo, assistant medical director at CareMount. "Talking about hospice can be frightening and upsetting for people, but we're really trying to normalize this process."

CareMount also is working on training physicians to have open conversations with their patients about hospice, DeFilippo said.

Hudson Valley Hospice provides end-of-life care in Dutchess and Ulster counties, and it served more than 2,000 patients last year. In addition to traditional hospice services, Hudson Valley Hospice provides complementary therapies, such as music and pet therapies, and end-of-life doulas.

Services are aimed at providing patients the best quality of life in their final months and weeks, whether they are at home, in skilled nursing facilities or in hospitals, Hudson Valley Hospice said. —J.H.