Thinking About PPACA

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Although the healthcare industry is holding its breath as it waits for the Supreme Court to decide on challenges to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), the effects of the legislation are already being felt. Hospitals are gearing up for policy changes effecting medical device companies, healthcare reporting and billing. Plus, more Americans are already benefiting by receiving coverage previously denied to them.

Presented in the April issue of Surgical Products, available now, is the 2012 Surgical Expansion Report (page 22). With just over 7,500 hospitals in the U.S., as many as 5,400 of them (an eight percent increase from last year) are either in the midst of expansion or have experienced some form of it in the last three years. Among these hospitals making improvements, some key enhancements being added include improved visualization technology; implementation of new, less invasive surgical capabilities; improved post-op patient care; and creating easier access to patient information.

Presumably, much of this expansion is due to the trickling increase in insured patients. Individuals with pre-existing conditions and dependents until the age of 26 are among the first to have already gained insurance. There are also fewer people losing benefits including individuals who become sick who can no longer be dropped from policies simply for their ailments because of the PPACA.

The short of it is, hospitals need to be ready for anything. Between the time the act began to take effect and 2019, it is estimated that 45 million previously uninsured individuals will have health insurance coverage in the U.S. Do you have a plan ready to deal with the potential influx of insured Americans? Ultimately, how does the PPACA affect healthcare and surgery at your hospital?

What do you think? E-mail jon.minnick@advantagemedia.com

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