

St. Maries Gazette Record, Wednesday, July 14, 2010 – by Chris D'Angelo

## Hospital repays Medicare \$300,000

Benewah Community Hospital recently discovered that it improperly billed Medicare beneficiaries for massage therapy services performed after 2003.

As a result, BCH has paid back approximately \$300,000 to the federal agency.

The billing error resulted after Medicare changed its policy, which the hospital only recently became aware of.

“Basically there are massage therapy services that were provided by Medicare, but Medicare changed their policy,” CEO Brian Nall said. “They now need to be provided by a physical therapist.”

Mr. Nall said Medicare is the only health insurance provider which requires massage therapy services to be provided by a physical therapist, as opposed to a massage therapist, which BCH had been using. It wasn't until the hospital hired its new rehabilitation department manager, Dr. Mark Feasline, that the problem was discovered.

“He (Dr. Feasline) pointed it out to us and we felt it was something we should look into and investigate,” Mr. Nall said. “We reported it to Medicare. We felt it (returning the money) was the ethical thing to do.”

Mr. Nall said Medicare beneficiaries who have received massage therapy services since 2003 may be entitled to a small refund. Patients should contact Charlene Konkright by phone at 245-7600 or mail at 229 S. 7th Street, St. Maries, Idaho 83861.

Despite the financial setback, Mr. Nall says BCH will continue to provide the same quality services it has in the past. And the hospital also has plans for growth.

As part of its \$28.5 million construction project, BCH will expand its physical therapy department.

“We feel physical therapy is a very, very big part of getting people back to their work and the recreational activities they enjoy,” Mr. Nall said.