

Report on Medicare Compliance Volume 30, Number 25. July 12, 2021 OIG: Focus Is On COVID-19 Response, Plans to 'Re-imagine' Guidance

By Nina Youngstrom

There are parallels in the way that messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) vaccines help the body defend against COVID-19 infection and the way compliance professionals, health care attorneys, executives and inspectors general carry out their roles. They provide a road map to organizations to protect themselves like the vaccines do, HHS Principal Deputy Inspector General Christi Grimm said June 29 at the American Health Law Association (AHLA) annual meeting.

“We serve to protect an organization and the people that organization serves—by showing them how to protect themselves. And, like the new Messenger RNA vaccines, our work typically involves providing a blueprint and some level of instructions, that, if followed, protect now and provide lasting immunity well into the future,” she said.^[1] “I suspect you play a similar role, giving instructions on how to guard against any number of legal, operational, and compliance issues. You might be thinking this metaphor is a bit of a stretch, but the comparison is both instructive and encouraging...The messenger RNA vaccines are just one part of this potential change. The question—and challenge for us now—is whether this inflection point is the spot on the timeline where we also collectively address consequential problems that have continued, resulting in significant effects on patients, providers, and health care programs.”

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