

## **Existing or Upcoming Mandates and Requirements for Human Balance Assessment; and a Solution**

Balance Engineering LLC, Henrietta, NY, USA

The underlying forces that drive government mandates related to balance assessment and fall-risk are complex – often interwoven – and derive from many sources. Among others, these include: our increased ability to improve outcome through data collection and analysis, a desire to streamline an increasingly complex healthcare system, the need to reduce national healthcare costs, and the benefits of documenting how and why important decisions are made.

This policy brief addresses some of the important existing and upcoming mandates regarding the rapidly growing area of human balance assessment and related fall-risk or vestibular function testing from various federal, state, and other entities. It will examine specific examples of such requirements. Finally, it will present a turnkey solution for rapid and easy fulfillment of many of these specifications.

**Physician Quality Reporting System (PQRS)** – Under a currently optional program, Medicare providers that bill outpatient physical therapy (PT) services receive a monetary incentive bonus when they fulfill PQRS (formerly PQRI) reporting requirements. Between 2010 and 2016 Medicare will transition from a bonus of 2% for fulfilling *optional* PQRS reporting requirements to a *mandatory plan* where providers face a *penalty of 2%* for *not reporting* under PQRS. It is not difficult to imagine additional mandatory documentation and reporting requirements emerging as well. Similar trends are already occurring simultaneously in almost all areas of Medicare.

**The EQUILIBRATE Solution:** PQRS requirements include specifications for claims-based and registry reporting for various measures, including (1) Fall-Risk Assessment and (2) Plan of Care. The EQUILIBRATE SYSTEM (Balance Engineering LLC) is a data-intensive, whole-body diagnostic and therapy tool for the non-invasive and objective assessment and treatment of balance dysfunction (including fall-risk). PT providers who use EQUILIBRATE will be able to streamline their PQRS reporting by taking advantage EQUILIBRATE's developing PQRS report function. Through this function users will have both Assessment and prescribed Plan of Care instantly documented and transferred to the desired reporting format. EQUILIBRATE also serves to provide a *standardized method* of fall-risk assessment and balance therapy that can be compared directly from patient to patient, independent of provider or clinic.

**Concussion in Athletics** – Working its way through many state and local governments are various forms of legislation establishing standards of treatment for public school student-athletes who suffer head injuries (e.g. concussion or mild traumatic brain injury). As an example, expected to soon pass New York State Legislature is bill 3953; the 'Concussion Management and Awareness Act' which provides for the "evaluation, treatment, and management of [student athletes] who are believed to have sustained mild traumatic brain injuries." The proposed law would keep such students out of athletic activities for at least 24 hours after being symptom-free, and require written authorization from a trained physician for the resumption of play. Such authorization will be archived in the student's permanent file.

**The EQUILIBRATE Solution:** EQUILIBRATE can assist public school personnel (including physicians, athletic trainers, and administrators) in concussion assessment and management through the establishment of documented baseline scores for vestibular function that can be referenced upon balance re-assessment after a concussion. This information provides a significant advantage by alerting decision-makers to previous injury, tracking improvement (or lack thereof), and giving an up-to-the-second snapshot of a student's balance function. EQUILIBRATE is not intended to replace the judgment or expertise of a trained expert, but exists as a tool to provide additional information so that the *best informed* decision can be made. Documentation of objective and quantitative data on the system, including all tests and user notes, can provide a record of why particular decisions were made and when.

**Medicare Advantage and the Part C Plan Ratings System** – Under the Medicare Advantage plan (Medicare Part C), beneficiaries receive Medicare benefits and services through private health insurance plans. In an effort to provide information on the quality and performance of various plans and providers, the Part C Plan Ratings System collects and collates numeric data and 'Star Ratings' for various key measures within major groups. As an example, within Medicare's Long Term Health Management group, Measure C23 is used to *manage* and *reduce fall-risk* by quantifying specific metrics such as (A) history of fall/balance issues, and (B) fall-risk intervention. Besides improving transparency for quality of care, higher Star Ratings can correspond to significantly greater reimbursement to individual plans.

**The EQUILIBRATE Solution:** Because of EQUILIBRATE's continuous documentation of (1) a patient's *risk-for-fall*, as well as his or her (2) *fall-risk intervention record* and (3) notations of *fall history*, the system provides a tremendous benefit to both healthcare systems and individual providers. By making access to these key metrics simple – *and more importantly by providing an easy and straightforward platform for these vital measures to actually take place* – it is possible for the EQUILIBRATE SYSTEM to help increase a plan's Star Rating and potentially increase reimbursement under Medicare Advantage. The ultimate advantages of improved care to the patient are obvious.

**The EQUILIBRATE SYSTEM for quantitative human balance assessment and therapy provides a multi-modal answer to the oncoming mandates in balance testing in an easy turnkey solution that includes:**

- ◆ Objective assessment of a subject's overall balance function, fall-risk, and fall history.
- ◆ Full documentation of results and time spent for all assessment and therapy activities, with charts to record progress and the option for archivable video capture.
- ◆ Documentation of Plan of Care, including customizable or pre-populated therapy and home exercise programs.
- ◆ The ability to establish and document a subject's baseline balance function prior to significant events such as a fall, surgery, concussion, or other injury.
- ◆ Competitive pricing for rapid return on investment (ROI) for the user, with the potential for significant revenue acceleration.

For more information, visit [www.balanceengineering.com](http://www.balanceengineering.com) or contact:

**Balance Engineering LLC**  
999 Lehigh Station Road  
Henrietta, NY 14467  
[www.balanceengineering.com](http://www.balanceengineering.com)

**Contact:**  
Michael Compisi  
(585) 286-2205  
[michael@balanceengineering.com](mailto:michael@balanceengineering.com)