Medicare criteria for determination of terminal status in patients with ALS

Patients with ALS must fulfill 1, 2, or 3:

1. Patient must demonstrate critically impaired breathing capacity
2. Critically impaired breathing capacity as demonstrated by all of the following characteristics occurring within the 12 months preceding initial hospice certification:

* Vital capacity <30% of normal
* Dyspnea at rest
* Requiring oxygen supplementation at rest
* Decline invasive ventilation; external ventilation used for comfort only

1. Patient must demonstrate both rapid progression of ALS and critical nutritional impairment:
2. Rapid progression of ALS as demonstrated by all of the following characteristics occurring within the 12 months preceding initial hospice certification:

* Progression from independent ambulation to wheelchair or to bed-bound status
* Progression from normal to barely intelligible or unintelligible speech
* Progression from normal to pureed diet
* Progression from independence in most or all activities of daily living to needing major assistance by caretaker in most all

1. Critical nutritional impairment as demonstrated by all the following characteristics occurring within the 12 months preceding initial hospice certification:

* Oral intake of nutrients and fluids insufficient to sustain life
* Continuing evidence of weight loss
* Dehydration or hypovolemia
* Absence of artificial feeding methods, sufficient to sustain life, but not for relieving hunger

1. Patients must demonstrate both rapid progression of ALS and life-threatening complications:
2. Rapid progression listed in 2a.
3. Life-threatening complications as demonstrated by one of the following characteristics occurring within the 12 months preceding initial hospice certification:

* Recurrent aspiration pneumonia (with or without tube feedings)
* Upper urinary tract infection
* Sepsis
* Recurrent fever after antibiotic therapy
* Pressure ulcer(s), stage 3-4

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*Local coverage determination for hospice determining terminal status* [Data file]. Retrieved

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