

Fact Check: Claims Data Show GAO's Assumptions Ignored Market Realities



According to a recent analysis of more than 20 million Medicare claims from Braid-Forbes Health Research, total utilization of the comprehensive metabolic panel and the individual tests **declined together** from 2017-2018 – a trend that underscores the flaws in GAO's assumptions that clinical labs were abandoning the comprehensive metabolic panel in favor of billing for individual tests. In order for the GAO's "unbundling" assumption to be true, the volume of panel tests billed to Medicare should have decreased and in turn the volume for all of the individual panel codes should have skyrocketed. Instead, analysis of data show that utilization across the range of individual tests included as part of a comprehensive panel **decreased on average 5 percent, and the panel test decreased 2 percent.**

Change in Utilization / Volume for Comprehensive Metabolic Panel & Component Tests (Based on Medicare Claims 2017-2018)

COMPREHENSIVE METABOLIC PANEL		-2%
Comprehensive Metabolic Panel Components	Assay of serum albumin	-2%
	Bilirubin total	-2%
	Assay of calcium	2%
	Assay blood carbon dioxide	0%
	Assay of blood chloride	-4%
	Assay of creatinine	-7%
	Assay glucose blood quant	-12%
	Assay alkaline phosphatase	-3%
	Assay of serum potassium	-6%
	Assay of protein serum	-4%
	Assay of serum sodium	-17%
	Alanine amino (alt) (sgpt)	11%
	Transferase (ast) (sgot)	-11%
	Assay of urea nitrogen	-13%