

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

News You Can Use: CMS Extends 1500 Deadline--Don't Miss These Key Details

Find out how a red arrow on the form can make or break your claims

Don't discard your old CMS-1500 forms just yet. CMS has granted you a respite and will allow the old version (12-90) until June 1, not April 1 as originally planned.

Past deadline: Next month, Medicare contractors were supposed to accept only the revised version (08-05), which accommodates the **National Provider Identifier** (NPI) number. The delay will give everyone, including providers, clearinghouses and vendors, more time to comply with the new form, says **Cyndee Weston**, executive director of the American Medical Billing Association.

-I am doubtful that some software vendors would have been ready by April 1,- she says. Many of them will welcome the delay.

Also, some carriers might not have been ready to accept the new form, says **Gary Lindsay** with **Lindsay Technical Consultants** in Mankato, Minn.

The problem: Print vendors, specifically the Government Printing Office (GPO), are selling incorrectly formatted versions of the revised form, says Brian Reitz, CMS health insurance specialist, in a March 9 Medicare notice.

Caution: Submitting incorrect versions of the revised form will delay your payments. Your carrier won't key in a claim using an incorrectly formatted version and will instead return it to you.

What to look for: To find out if your CMS-1500 version 08-05 is in danger of bouncing back, look at the upper-right corner of the form. Properly formatted claim forms contain approximately a one-quarter-inch gap between the tip of the red arrow above the vertically stacked word -CARRIER- and the top edge of the paper. -If the tip of the red arrow is touching or close to touching the top edge of the paper, then the form is not printed to specifications,- Reitz says.

Beware of 3 Remaining Problems

Even with the delay, the new form will have problems, Lindsay says:

- There's no space to list the secondary carrier, which all primary carriers require.
- Physical therapists must list the date of the patient's last x-ray, but there's no space for it.
- And finally, the carrier's name and address are in the top right-hand corner, which means you can't use a windowed envelope--because the stamp should be placed in the upper right-hand corner.

Unresolved issue: -We don't exactly know how the claim form delay will play out with the NPI deadline in May,- Weston says.

-It shouldn't be an issue for electronic transactions. But with paper claims, using old forms without the NPI after the deadline could become an issue,- she says.

