# Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

## Reader Question: Plug In for Better Documentation

**Question:** I've heard that electronic medical records can help cut denials. Is that true?

Maryland Subscriber

**Answer:** Yes. Although electronic medical records serve more of a clinical function than a billing one, when used correctly they can actually make life in the billing department a lot easier.

One major advantage of EMRs is that they make it simpler to obtain documentation, says consultant **Jim Collins, CHCC, CPC**, president of CompliantMD Inc. in Matthews, N.C.

"This is a great benefit over paper-based records because billing staff frequently need to review records to bill appropriately or fight denials," he says.
 Having the information at your fingertips cuts out the time it takes to follow the paper trail, therefore speeding up the billing process substantially, Collins says.

For example, if you attach modifier -22 (Unusual procedural services) to a claim, you have to submit a copy of the medical record with that claim.

"In a paper-based environment, this could take hours of track-down time and extend the payment process days or weeks," Collins says. "In an EMR environment, it takes just seconds."

Another advantage of an EMR system is that it eliminates billing errors resulting from the physician inadvertently leaving important information off the superbill, says **Eric Goldstein**, CEO of Medical Practice Consultant LLP in Dunwoody, Ga.

Similarly, EMRs help eliminate coding mistakes, he says. If your office is looking into investing in EMRs, make sure your EMR and your practice management systems are compatible, Goldstein says.

If you get them from the same vendor, you shouldn't have a problem, but a lot of PM system vendors don't carry EMRs, and vice versa.

It's important that the two systems are able to talk to each other, because they share information like demographics, scheduling, and - most important for billing - evaluation and management coding.