

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

COMPLIANCE: Don't Be Too Forward, OIG Tells Carriers

The check may be in the mail - but you may never see it anyway.

A mix-up with the address you have on file with your durable medical equipment regional carrier may mean that you never receive any more checks at all. A single returned check could lead to a moratorium on payments.

If you change your address and don't notify your carrier, the Postal Service isn't allowed to notify the carrier for you, says the **HHS Office of Inspector General** in a new report on the "Do Not Forward Initiative" (A-02-02-01023). Until you provide a valid address to the carrier, any claims received after one mailing bounces won't result in checks to the provider. Those claims will be "processed for adjudication only."

The DNF initiative has expanded as of last October, when the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** amended the Medicare Carriers Manual to say that hardcopy remittance notices also should bear the "Do Not Forward" stamp. Not only that, but carriers now won't pay physicians and suppliers by electronic funds transfer if they suspect the supplier's address may have changed, according to a recent carrier bulletin.

Physicians and suppliers can update their addresses on file by using the 855B or 855S forms, for group providers and non-group providers respectively.

The OIG says CMS has instructed carriers to void checks that come back in the mail and hold on to them for a year as "other liabilities."

But due to weaknesses in the systems used by DMERCs and carriers, the Multiple Carrier System and the VIPS Medicare System, some returned items aren't being posted properly as expenses and liabilities. Instead they're being recorded as voided checks, warns the OIG in its report. That's leading the DMERC and carriers in Region II to misstate \$4,845,530 in their financial reports, notes the OIG.