

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Democrats Push For Sweeping Medicare Changes

The CHAMP Act, currently facing a vote in the House, features a grab bag of Medicare proposals that showcase Democrats- Medicare priorities, and could become law soon:

- Beneficiaries wouldn't have to pay 20-percent copayments or deductibles for current or future preventive benefits. The bill also specifies that colorectal cancer screening tests never count toward the patient's deductible--even if your physician finds something, removes some tissue, or reaches a diagnosis.
- Your physician would no longer be able to own a stake in a specialty hospital and refer patients to it. Congress would abolish the -whole hospital- exemption, which allows doctors to refer patients to a hospital as long as they own a stake in the whole thing, not just part of it.
- Medicare would have the authority to pay for new preventive benefits without specific approval from Congress. The **U.S. Preventive Health Services Task Force** would have to recommend the preventive health benefits for coverage.
- The copayment for mental health services would drop from 50 percent to the standard 20 percent.
- Low-income seniors would find it easier to obtain financial help, especially with the Part D prescription drug program. The CHAMP Act would expand the Low Income Subsidy (LIS) and the Medicare Savings Program (MSP).
- You might also receive some extra reimbursement for helping your patients with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), if you live in an area covered by a proposed demonstration project.
- Provisions benefiting rural areas would gain an extension, including physician scarcity bonuses, and a geographic -floor- that makes sure rural practices don't earn less than the average for Medicare patients.