

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### E-prescribing: CMS Puts A Rush On Electronic Prescriptions

Seven months ahead of the deadline set by the Medicare Modernization Act, new **Health and Human Services** Secretary **Mike Leavitt** announced Jan. 27 that proposed rules should have major electronic prescribing standards in place by the time Part D rolls out in January 2006.

The technology, which transmits prescriptions electronically to the patient's pharmacy, would allow providers instant access to a patient's eligibility and medication history. The **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services** says e-prescribing would cut health costs and improve care by eliminating hard-to-read physician handwriting and by automating drug interaction and allergy checks.

Although the reform bill requires participating drug plans to support e-prescribing, the bill doesn't require physicians and pharmacies to use the technology. Secretary Leavitt predicted that firm guidance on how to communicate and interpret health data would "make e-prescribing more attractive."

**Details:** The proposed regulations would standardize transactions between physicians and pharmacies on new prescriptions, refills, changes and cancellations. They also set standards for physician inquiries about patients' eligibility and coverage under prescription drug plans and Medicare's new prescription benefit. And they set out protocols for physicians to obtain information about formularies and benefits.