

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Hospital Association Raises NPI Questions

While physicians have been wondering how the new national provider identifier (NPI) requirement will affect them, the **American Hospital Association** has done more than just wonder.

Hospitals are confused about how and when the NPI will be implemented, and they don't have guidance on how they should decide whether to apply for subpart identifiers, AHA representative **George Arges** testified to the **National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics** on April 6.

Because of this, the inconsistencies in hospitals' approach to this decision will increase costs for providers and health plans, defeating the purpose of administrative simplification, Arges explained.

A central authority that can offer "clear and authoritative" answers to NPI questions, subpart guidance, bulk enumeration procedures, and enumeration progress reports is imperative, Arges said.

The **Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) should use a staged NPI implementation approach to reduce confusion and costs, the AHA recommended. The association also asked HHS to monitor the NPI enumeration process to identify whether providers need more outreach measures.

HHS should clarify that routine NPI use shouldn't begin before 2007's first quarter. The agency shouldn't force providers to submit NPIs when large numbers of receivers aren't prepared to handle them, the association asserted.