

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### Immunize Yourself Against Losses With New Vaccine Payments

#### Physician fee schedule contains good news on other drug payments as well

Think oncologists are the only ones receiving some help in the new fee schedule with dispensing drugs? Look a little closer.

Payments for vaccines will also shoot up, CMS Administrator **Mark McClellan** told a media conference call Nov. 3. For example, payments for administering the influenza vaccine will go up 100 percent in January.

Separately, a final rule for outpatient prospective payment included a 3.3 percent inflation update, and large payment boosts for diagnostic mammograms, colonoscopies and other preventive services. And a third regulation moved inpatient psychiatric care to a prospective payment system, which McClellan said would improve efficiency.

The physician fee schedule rule includes second quarter data on drug prices, but McClellan said he doesn't expect to see much change in the third quarter data.

Another important achievement in the new rule: A \$57 dispensing fee for inhalation drugs (or \$88 for a 90-day period). The **General Accountability Office** had complained that Medicare planned to cut inhalation drugs steeply without providing any payments for dispensing them. So Medicare added the payment, which McClellan cautioned was only a transitional amount and might decrease in future years.

In addition to all the new drug administration codes, you'll be able to bill separately for high-level evaluation and management services, critical care or prolonged services if your patients suffer an adverse reaction to chemotherapy drugs, McClellan noted. And CMS wants to work with oncology associations to help oncologists join purchasing groups and obtain the least expensive drugs.

Medicare will save only about as much on oncology services as Congress had predicted when legislators passed the Medicare Modernization Act, McClellan said. All in all, payments will decrease about 6 percent. These savings are in line with what "stakeholders," including oncologists, agreed to in the negotiations leading up to the MMA, he said.