

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Laboratory Signatures: CMS Appears Poised to Delay Labs' Physician Signature Requirements Further

Although the agency doesn't specifically rescind the rule, it does indicate that more information will be coming soon.

If you've been worried about the new physician signature requirement that might wreak havoc with your lab pay, CMS is listening. Jan. 1 was the initial deadline for referring physicians and non-physician practitioners (NPP) to personally sign all paper requisitions for clinical lab tests, but earlier this year, CMS posted a notice delaying the implementation date, indicating that it would offer education to physicians through the first quarter of 2011, and would most likely enforce it by April 1. However, on March 31, CMS noted that it expects that physician education may take longer than planned.

"After further input from community, CMS has decided to focus for the remainder of 2011 on changing the regulation that requires signatures on laboratory requisitions because of concerns that physicians, NPPs, and clinical diagnostic laboratories are having difficulty complying with this policy," CMS said in a March 31 statement.

Although this statement does not specifically say that labs won't face the signature requirements, it does indicate that CMS plans to change that rule at some point during 2011. Keep an eye on the Insider as CMS issues more information about this regulation.