

## **Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert**

### **Obesity And Chronic Disease Drive Medicare Growth**

The rate of obesity among Medicare patients doubled from 1987 to 2002--but spending on those patients more than doubled, according to a new report in the journal Health Affairs.

Almost all Medicare spending growth of the past 15 years has resulted in the sharp increase in the number of obese patients or patients with chronic conditions, according to the analysis of Medicare cost and patient data.

In 1987, only 11.7 percent of Medicare patients were considered obese, but that grew to 22.5 percent in 2002. Spending on obese patients grew from 9.4 percent of Medicare's budget in 1987 to 24.8 percent in 2002, according to a report in USA Today.

Meanwhile, doctors are trying harder to treat patients with diabetes, high blood pressure or low levels of -good- cholesterol, the study said.