

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PART B PAYMENT: Find Out How the New Medicare Bill Would Affect Your Practice

Physicians, therapists, suppliers and others cheer the House's efforts in passing the new measure

Halting the 10.6 percent Medicare rate cut is just the beginning of the benefits included in the new legislative bill H.R. 6331, which the House passed on June 24 and the Senate will soon review.

Practices across the country are applauding the House's passage of the new Medicare bill, and the measure includes advantages in several areas. Read on for some highlights of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act, which the Senate is expected to take up any day now:

- **Electronic prescribing:** If passed, the new bill will offer a two-percent incentive to successful electronic prescribers in 2009 and 2010.
- **Mental health services:** If signed into law by the Senate, the bill would alter the copay that Medicare beneficiaries pay for mental health services, gradually phasing out the copayment by 2014.
- **Primary care services:** The bill would use \$100 million from the Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance Trust Fund and put it toward Medicare beneficiaries- expanded access to primary care services.
- **Physical therapy:** The new bill would extend the exceptions process for the Medicare therapy cap through Dec. 31, 2009. Currently, the exceptions process is expected to expire on June 30, but this bill would add an additional 18 months to that.
- **Brachytherapy:** The bill intends to extend the payment rule for brachytherapy and therapeutic radiopharmaceuticals to Jan. 1, 2010. Currently, the payment rule is due to expire on July 1.
- **Competitive bidding:** The bill calls for an 18-month delay to rounds one and two of the competitive bidding, which are currently due to start on July 1. In addition, the bill would exclude negative pressure wound therapy items and services from competitive bidding and would exclude Puerto Rico from the program during rounds one and two.
- **Imaging:** The bill would ensure that providers of advanced diagnostic imaging (diagnostic MRI, CT, and nuclear medicine services, PET, etc.) would have to be accredited if they want to collect payment for the technical component of those services.

To read the full bill, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/c110query.html> and type -HR 6331- in the search box.