

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Physician Note: Firearm Safety Case May Impede Provider and Patient Dialogue

Plus: Anesthesiologist gets 100 months for fraudulent Opioid prescriptions

In yet another twist on the national debate on gun control, a federal court will soon weigh in on a physician's right to advise families on firearm safety.

A Florida law is under fire from the American Medical Association (AMA) and eight other medical groups because the law aims to censor firearm dialogue between providers and their patients, states a May 17 AMA Wire story.

"The law directly clashes with a consensus on care that dates to at least 1989," says AMA Wire, "That year, the AMA enacted a policy that encourages members to inquire into the presence of firearms in households and to promote the use of safety locks on guns in an effort to reduce injuries to children."

The outcome could infringe on the already metered communications between providers and patients. The AMA is worried that the ruling may hinder other areas of physician/patient exchange.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit will hear arguments in Atlanta on June 21, says AMA Wire.

Resource: For more information on this important case regarding Physician/Patient dialogue, visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/ama-wire/post/freedom-of-patient-physician-conversations-hinges-court-case>.

In other news...

Opioid abuse is an area of concern for the OIG as physicians continue to distribute excessive prescriptions.

A Kentucky anesthesiologist was found guilty of prescribing "hydrocodone without a legitimate medical purpose." Not only was he forced to serve 100 months in prison, but in addition, he must give up his medical license, property, and pay \$827,000 "in victim restitution."

"This doctor was operating as a drug dealer in a white coat," said OIG Special Agent in Charge **Derrick L. Jackson** in a U.S. Department of Justice press release, "This sentence should be a wake-up call to physicians across the state: if you're overprescribing narcotics you are facing a lengthy prison sentence."

The over prescription and unlawful prescription of opioids continues to be a struggle for the OIG, but the investigators maintain that this is a top priority, and they will "vigorously" pursue all abusers of these prevalent fraud.

Resource: For a more in-depth look at this U.S. Department of Justice case, visit <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/kentucky-anesthesiologist-sentenced-100-months-unlawful-distribution-controlled-substances>.