

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

### **PHYSICIAN NOTES: California-Based HIPAA Violator Sentenced to Jail Time**

Plus: OIG finds that over 70 percent of high-dollar payments resulted in overpayments.

Just when you thought you could rest on your HIPAA laurels, comes news that investigators take patient privacy violations more seriously than ever.

Last week, a hospital employee in California was sentenced to four months in prison for reading medical files that did not pertain to his line of work.

The employee, a hospital researcher at the UCLA School of Medicine, accessed patient records at the hospital over 300 times during a three-week period, mostly to peek at the private health records of celebrities, according to an April 27 Dept. of Justice news release.

In his plea agreement, the employee "acknowledged that at the time he viewed these patients' medical information, he had no legitimate reason, medical or otherwise, for obtaining the personal information," the press release indicated.

The DOJ investigators did not find any evidence that the employee attempted to use or sell the information that he accessed -- he apparently sought the information out of curiosity.

To read the complete news release, visit the DOJ Web site at [www.justice.gov/usao/cac/pressroom/pr2010/079.html](http://www.justice.gov/usao/cac/pressroom/pr2010/079.html).