

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Physician Notes: CMS Offers Update on SSN Removal from Medicare Cards

Plus: New tools from the ONC hope to help providers address health IT issues

Practice administrators weary of the transition from fee-for-service care to MACRA have another line item on their collective plate to consider. In an effort to stop identity theft and protect the privacy of its beneficiaries, MACRA requires CMS to remove all Social Security Numbers (SSNs) from Medicare cards by April of 2019.

Advice and information about Medicare's timeline and what the initiative will entail was revealed in the Sept. 29, 2016 MLN Connects Provider e-News. The program, called the Social Security Number Removal Initiative, or SSNRI for short, will go into effect starting April 2018 with the transition period running through Dec. 31, 2019.

"A new randomly generated Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI) will replace the SSN-based Health Insurance Claim Number on new Medicare cards for transactions like billing, eligibility status, and claim status," says the MLN Connects release.

With both a comprehensive overview of the SSNRI and a link for providers on how to adapt their practice management systems in preparation for the change, CMS hopes to prepare providers in advance so that the eventual conversion runs smoothly.

For a link to the MLN Connects Provider e-News, visit

https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Outreach/FFSProvPartProg/Provider-Partnership-Email-Archive-Items/2016-09-29-eNews.html?DLPage=1&DLEntries=10&DLSort=0&DLSortDir=descending#_Toc462812247.

In other news....

As the celebration of technology came to a close with the end of the ONC's health IT week, the HHS technology hub offered up new tools to aid providers with their digital livelihood.

The two initiatives target problem areas in the industry. The first addresses provider missteps and management of acquiring and implementing EHRs and is called the EHR contract guide. The other program is an expansion of the already popular Patient Engagement Playbook. The add-on [The Health IT Playbook](#) aims to increase patient and provider discourse, making the EHR process and delivery of information more user-friendly and HIPAA-safe.

"I know from my experiences practicing emergency medicine and managing information technology for a health system how helpful practical tools can be for clinicians and health care administrators as they navigate the purchase and use of health IT," said **B. Vindell Washington MD, MHCM**, national coordinator for health information technology in a Sept. 28, 2016 press release from the ONC. "The EHR contract guide and the Health IT Playbook incorporate feedback we have heard from the provider community about the need for clear, reliable information about EHR contracts and user-friendly, specific tools for how to get the most out of health IT to better manage patient health and care."

Resource: To review the news release with links to the new ONC products, visit

<http://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2016/09/26/ehr-contract-guide-and-health-it-playbook-help-clinicians-and-hospitals-get-most-out-health.html>.