

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PHYSICIAN NOTES :CMS' Senior Medicare Patrol Project Appears to Be

Plus: Even carriers appear to be confused about how to report discharge codes for deceased patients.

The Senior Medicare Patrol project may be losing momentum, but it could still cause headaches for you if your patients don't understand how Medicare billing works.

In 2008, 57 Patrol projects in all 50 states and Puerto Rico had 4,685 active volunteers who educated beneficiaries in 6,869 group education sessions and held 24,505 one-on-one counseling sessions, the HHS Office of Inspector General says in a recent report. The projects also conducted media and community outreach.

The program aims to teach patients how to detect and report waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicare program.

The programs had fewer active volunteers and saved Medicare less money than in previous years, the OIG notes. However, the projects may not be receiving full credit for savings attributable to their work,

the report cautions. Fraud and errors may be reduced in light of Medicare beneficiaries' scrutiny of their bills.

The report is available online at www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-02-09-00170.pdf.