

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PHYSICIAN NOTES: CMS Will Cover HIV Screening As Preventive Care Service Effective Immediately

Plus: FDA asks providers to be aware of potential dangers of negative pressure wound therapy devices.

You're probably accustomed to CMS taking away coverage for certain services, but in an early holiday gift to practices, CMS has actually added a preventive care service to its roster of covered screenings, effective immediately.

CMS issued a final decision on Dec. 8 declaring that HIV testing will now be covered for Medicare beneficiaries who are at increased risk for HIV (including pregnant women) -- as well as any Medicare beneficiary who requests the test.

The new coverage decision could signal additional coverage announcements, now that the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (MIPPA) gives CMS the flexibility of adding to CMS's list of preventive services. Previously, Congress had to authorize Medicare to cover additional preventive screening tests, according to a Dec. 8 CMS press release.

"Today's decision marks an important milestone in the history of the Medicare program," said HHS Secretary **Kathleen Sebelius** in a statement. "Beginning with expanding coverage for HIV screening, we can now work proactively as a program to help keep Medicare beneficiaries healthy and happy and take a more active role in evaluating the evidence for preventive services."

You can find more information on the new HIV screening benefit on the CMS Web site at www.cms.hhs.gov/mcd/viewdecisionmemo.asp?id=229.