

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PHYSICIAN NOTES: Congress Bickers While Your Pay Cut Looms Closer

And the Medicare cuts may hit closer to home for some staffers

Urgent: Your office could be coping with a 10-percent cut to its Medicare payments in just a few months. And some members of Congress want to put off dealing with this issue until later.

Senate Finance Committee Chair **Max Baucus** (D-MT) told House leaders that he wants to pass a separate bill later this year to deal with Medicare issues, including your looming pay cut. His colleague, Sen. **Charles Grassley** (R-IA) wants the House to pass an identical bill to the children's health-only bill the Senate already passed.

The House passed a version of the bill that would guarantee you a small pay hike for 2008 and 2009. Rep. **Charles Rangel** (D-NY) told reporters he couldn't imagine separating the children's health and Medicare issues into two different bills, according to CongressDaily.

The House and Senate were unable to resolve their disagreement as of press time. That means they'll probably have to pass a simple extension of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and put off a sweeping bill for later.

In other news:

-Your job could be in jeopardy. Doctors won't just restrict access to Medicare patients if Medicare rates go down--they'll also slim down the size of their staffs, according to a new survey from the **Medical Group Management Association**.

Some 57 percent of physicians said they would have to reduce staff health benefits to stay afloat. And 44 percent would cut -administrative staffing levels.- A third of doctors would cut clinical staffing levels. But only 9 percent would cut the number of physicians in their practices, reports CQ HealthBeat.

- Your doctors- claims data could be on the Internet soon. A consumer group, **Consumers- Checkbook**, won a lawsuit, so Medicare must release data on your physicians- services. The data covers Illinois, Maryland, Virginia, Washington and Washington, DC. The group plans to list each doctor in those states, along with how many times each doctor has performed each procedure. That way, patients can choose to go to a doctor who performs a particular procedure more often, according to the **American Medical Association-s** news site.

- Scammer of the week: Panama City, FL, pain management physician **John Durfey** was sentenced to 20 years in prison for distribution of controlled substances and health care fraud. Not only did he prescribe pain medications recklessly, but Durfey also billed for office visits when he was out of town and couldn't have seen the patients, prosecutors said.