

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PHYSICIAN NOTES: Congress Votes to Postpone the 21.2 Percent Conversion Factor Cut

Plus: Know hospice claims reporting requirements, or expect added scrutiny.

With just days to go until the government slashes the conversion factor by 21.2 percent, Congress has stepped in to try and delay that cut. On Dec. 16, the House of Representatives voted to approve an amendment to HR 3326 (the Dept. of Defense Appropriations Act) that would freeze Medicare payments at current levels through the end of February. The Senate followed suit on Dec. 18 and approved the bill as well. This temporary fix is being considered as a "bridge" to help physician payments stay stable while a more permanent fix is still up in the air, as Congress hasn't made a decision on whether to permanently change the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula.

Now that the House and Senate have passed the bill, it just awaits the president's signature before it becomes law. If the president signs it into law, you won't face the 21.2 percent conversion factor cut until March 1, 2010. Medical societies are hopeful that a permanent solution will be put into place by then. To read the amendments to HR 3326, visit http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/FY2010_Defense_Bill_Text.pdf.