

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### Physician Notes: County Settles With HHS Over HIPAA Violations

**Plus: CMS resolves hospice NPI issue.**

Even government entities are finding that keeping up with patient privacy laws can be a tough task. This week, Skagit County, Washington settled with HHS for \$215,000 over potential HIPAA violations.

"This case marks the first settlement with a county government and sends a strong message about the importance of HIPAA compliance to local and county governments, regardless of size," said **Susan McAndrew**, deputy director of health information privacy at the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in a March 7 statement. "These agencies need to adopt a meaningful compliance program to ensure the privacy and security of patients' information."

The county came under investigation after a breach report revealed that financial receipts containing electronic protected health information (ePHI) of seven individuals were accessed by others after the ePHI had been moved to a publicly accessible server. The subsequent investigation revealed that the ePHI of 1,581 individuals was actually at risk.

To read the Resolution Agreement, visit [www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/enforcement/examples/skagit-agreement.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/enforcement/examples/skagit-agreement.html).

In other news...

If your hospice reimbursement has been held up by CMS's hold on claims with service facility NPIs, you should see relief soon. "On January 6, 2014, Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) began holding all hospice claims that had a service facility national provider identifier (NPI)," MACs explain on their websites.

You should receive your rightful reimbursement with a minimum of fuss. "A computer fix was recently implemented and claims are now being processed. No action is required by hospices," the MACs say.