

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PHYSICIAN NOTES: Electronic Health Records Could Get Boost From Federal Employees

Bill would require EHRs and performance-based funding for feds

You could be seeing wider use of electronic health records in your office soon, if a new bill is successful. The **House Committee on Government Reform** recently started debating H.R. 4859, the "Federal Family Health Information Technology Act." Under the bill, insurers would provide all **Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan** participants--nearly 8 million federal workers--with EHRs beginning in 2008.

Insurers would collect participants' health care, prescription claims and related health services data. Providers and participants could contribute employee-related health information to the participant's file, ranging from claims and services to family health history and over-the-counter medication usage. Participants could easily manage their EHR information through a Web-based service.

In other news:

- Federal legislation allowing small businesses to band together across state lines into associations to buy health insurance should guarantee coverage for mammography, [OB-Gyn services](#), cervical cancer screenings and other women's health services, the **American College of Radiology** says. The ACR is working with Senators to make sure S. 1955, which passed the **Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee**, includes coverage for these procedures.
- Fewer physicians are providing charity care to uninsured patients, even as the number of uninsured patients increases, according to a study by the **Center for Studying Health System Change**. In 2004-2005, 68 percent of doctors said they provided free or discounted care to uninsured patients, down from 76 percent 10 years earlier, according to an article in the March 23 Washington Post.
- The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** chose six sites for a demonstration project aimed at detecting cancer early and reducing the disparities in cancer care between minorities and other Americans. They include **Johns Hopkins Medical Center** in Baltimore, MD and **Josephine Ford Cancer Center** in the Detroit, MI area.
- CMS revised carrier complaint procedures in Transmittal 18, dated March 17, including complaints to your carrier and your CMS regional office.
- CMS' methodology for calculating the error rate through the Comprehensive Error Rate Testing (CERT) program is adequate, the **Government Accountability Office** found in report GAO-06-300. CMS found a total error rate of 9.3 percent for Medicare claims in 2004.
- A doctor of osteopathy can be a carrier medical director, and there can be more than two physicians in that role at a carrier, CMS clarifies in Transmittal 136, dated Feb. 1