

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PHYSICIAN NOTES: Hurry Up And Wait For NPI Database Access

Now's the time to double-check your information in the database

Just when it seemed like your troubles with obtaining the NPIs for referring doctors were at an end, it turns out you'll be making do for a little longer.

Delay: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) had planned to give you access to the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) database at the end of June. This would have allowed you to look up your referring physicians- NPI numbers, or just download the whole database.

But now CMS is delaying your access to this information until August 1.

The reason: CMS is concerned that you might need more time to look up your information in the NPPES database. You should make sure to delete any information you wouldn't want the public to be able to view and make any updates. CMS will soon announce the deadline to make changes you want included in the downloadable file.

CMS says it understands pro-viders have an -urgent need- for this data. But at the same time, CMS wants to make sure the data is as accurate as possible.

You can find out more information, including a list of the -data elements- that will be publicly disclosed, online at www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand/06a_DataDissemination.asp.

In other news:

- [The **American Medical Association \(AMA\)** voted to support quality measures and pay-for-performance--but only as long as these initiatives don't open the door the government and insurers meddling in how doctors treat patients. The AMA also called on Congress at its annual House of Delegates meeting to reverse the 10-percent cut that's staring doctors in the face this coming January.](#)

- [Physicians usually try to exhaust non-surgical options before resorting to surgery for back pain. But surgery is by far the best option for degenerative spondylolisthesis with spinal stenosis, according to a new study in the May 31 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine.](#)

- [Medicare should consider requiring credentials for sonographers who operate ultrasound machines, says the **Government Accountability Office** in a new report. The current inconsistent requirements are undermining people's faith in the accuracy of ultrasound scans, the GAO warns.](#)

[Three out of four ultrasound procedures billed to Medicare involve echocardiograms to diagnose heart conditions or non-invasive vascular procedures to monitor blood flow and detect blockage or injury in veins or arteries, the GAO notes.](#)