

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PHYSICIAN NOTES: It's Not Too Late to Participate in PQRI

Envious of the 1.5 percent bonuses that other practices are collecting?

You can join the program as of July 1

If you haven't jumped on the PQRI bandwagon yet, now's the time to get on board.

CMS will honor an alternative reporting period this year that runs between July 1 and Dec. 1. -So insofar as professionals that have not begun to participate, this will give an additional opportunity to begin participation in PQRI for this year,- according to information noted on a June 10 CMS open door forum (ODF).

-The incentive payment of 1.5 percent for Part B services will only apply to that second half of the year, July 1 to Dec. 31, but nevertheless, professionals who report this way will be able to get that incentive payment,- a CMS official said during the ODF.

For more about the PQRI program, visit the CMS Web site at www.cms.hhs.gov/pqri.

In other news ...

- **Although lawmakers haven't halted the 10-percent payment cut** that physicians expect starting July 1, they are working on a solution.

On June 6, **Sen. Max Baucus** (D-Mont.) introduced a bill that would cost \$10 billion to implement, but would halt the rate cut for 18 months and actually boost payment rates by 1 percent.

Meanwhile, **Sen. Chuck Grassley** (R-Iowa) debuted his own bill that would also boost rates by 1 percent and kill the rate cut, but the two bills are funded differently.

While Baucus proposes funding the physician rate increase largely by cutting payments to Medicare Advantage, Grassley's bill does not. **President Bush** has vowed to veto any bill that includes cuts to Medi-care Advantage.

Baucus- bill should hit the Senate floor this week.

- **Hospices face a new per-beneficiary cap for 2008, which** CMS published in a May 28 announcement. The 2008 cap for this year will be \$22,386.15.

For more information on the government's methodology in creating the cap amount, visit the CMS Web site at www.cms.hhs.gov/hospice/downloads/2008_Aggregate_CapAmount.pdf.