

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Physician Notes: MACs Still Keeping Medicare Claims in Holding Pattern

Plus: Texas-based doctor nailed for billing Medicare for dates of service when he was actually on vacation.

The three-day Memorial Day weekend may have given you more time to relax, but it was back to reality on Tuesday, when practices discovered that Congress members -- who are their only hope in getting Medicare pay rates frozen at current levels through June -- are still on recess.

Last week, the freeze that has been keeping the Medicare conversion factor at 2009 levels expired, meaning that Part B practices could face a 21 percent cut effective for dates of service June 1 and thereafter. Because Congress has not yet intervened to stop those cuts, CMS instructed MACs to hold claims for the first ten business days of June while lawmakers can deliberate whether to eliminate the looming cuts.

When the Senate reconvenes on June 7, the Insider will have a clearer picture of whether an extension bill seems likely to pass. As we mentioned last week, The House Ways and Means Committee published the text of H.R. 4213, "The American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act of 2010," on its Web site on May 20. The bill would increase your payments through the end of this year, according to the text listed on the Committee's Web site, which states, "In lieu of the update to the single conversion factor ... that would otherwise apply for 2010 for the period beginning on June 1, 2010, and ending on December 31, 2010, the update to the single conversion factor shall be 1.3 percent." The bill also includes provisions that would ensure that additional cuts don't take place through 2013. Keep an eye on the Insider for more information on this developing story.