

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### Physician Notes: Medicare Owes Millions in Back Pay to Physicians in California, Hawaii, and Nevada

**Plus: Congress to consider paying hospices at higher rates for days near the beginning and ending of the patient's stay.**

Physicians in three states continue to tap their fingers waiting for payment from Medicare, thanks to a recent UPIN number snafu that one carrier appears to have made.

According to a Nov. 8 L.A. Times article, some physicians in Hawaii, California, and Nevada haven't collected money from Medicare for long periods of time -- some not since February -- and money is getting tight in those practices.

**The reason:** Physicians in these states were expected to begin using new UPIN numbers last May, but one of the Medicare contractors changed during the UPIN assignment process. Therefore, the carrier never sent out the UPINs and the

physicians are unable to collect payment from Medicare without those PIN numbers on file.

To read the L.A. Times article in its entirety, visit

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-medicare8-2008nov08,0,4948549.story?page=1>.

#### In other news ...

- Your hospice payments could look a lot different if Congress heeds the advice of an influential advisory body.

The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission is considering recommending a payment revamp that would reimburse hospices at higher rates for days at the beginning and ending of hospice stays and at lower rates for days in the middle.

MedPAC will likely vote on the measure, as well as other hospice proposals, in its January meeting. If passed, the recommendation would go in the commission's March report to Congress.

The National Association for Home Care & Hospice and the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization are coming up with their own recommendations for reimbursement modifications to present to law- and policymakers, they say.

To read MedPAC's most recent report to Congress, go online to

[http://www.medpac.gov/documents/Jun08\\_EntireReport.pdf](http://www.medpac.gov/documents/Jun08_EntireReport.pdf).