

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### PHYSICIAN NOTES: Medicare's Strike Force Comes Down Hard on Dozens of Shady Providers

Plus: HHS no longer provides oversight of HIPAA -- you'll instead look to the Office of Civil Rights for guidance on this rule.

Medicare's Fraud Strike Forces continue to focus on shady providers. In its latest sweep, 32 people have been indicted on fraud charges related to so-called "arthritis kits," power wheelchairs, and enteral nutrition products, according to a release from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Authorities made arrests in Houston, New York, Boston, and Louisiana as part of the Health Care Fraud Prevention & Enforcement Action Team (HEAT), a joint initiative announced in May 2009 between the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services. The defendants provided medically unnecessary items or no items at all, the FBI says. "We will protect the Medicare program and its beneficiaries by stopping those who falsely bill for power wheelchairs, orthotic devices and other supplies that are not needed," HHS Inspector General **Daniel Levinson** says in the release.

"Today's arrests demonstrate the significant impact of the new HEAT strike force on combating fraud and abuse in the Houston area." Houston is the fourth area to be assigned a strike force, after Miami, Los Angeles, and Detroit, the FBI notes. So far, the strike force campaign has obtained indictments of more than 293 individuals and organizations that have bilked the Medicare program for more than \$674 million.