

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### Physician Notes: MedPAC Releases Snapshot of the Average Medicare Patient

Plus: HIPAA violation of \$100,000 stuns health plan

If you've ever wondered just how vast the Medicare program is, just take a look at the new June 2008 MedPAC Data Book, which offers a glimpse into the specifics of the Medicare program.

According to the MedPAC report, released on July 18, Medicare spending accounts for 22 percent of the \$1.76 trillion spent annually in the U.S. on personal healthcare.

In addition, the report reveals that the average age of a Medicare patient is between 65 and 74 years, although per-capita expenditures were greatest in patients between the ages of 75 and 84, at \$11,026 per patient.

You can read the complete MedPAC document at [http://medpac.gov/document\\_TOC.cfm?id=428](http://medpac.gov/document_TOC.cfm?id=428).

#### In other news ...

#### 1. Practices that believed HIPAA was "out of sight, out of mind" are sorely mistaken.

Earlier this week, CMS announced that one health plan had to pay a \$100,000 "resolution" to the **Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS)** for violating patients' protected health information (PHI).

**The charge?** The health system left laptops, backup tapes and optical disks unattended. The devices, which all held PHI on them, "were subsequently lost or stolen, compromising the protected health information of over 386,000 patients," according to the HHS release. After the company informed the patients of the theft, over 30 patients complained to HHS.

You can read the details of this action on the CMS Web site at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/enforcement/>.

#### 2. Health care practices are one step closer to a broader adoption of electronic health information technology.

On July 23, the **House Committee on Energy and Commerce** approved via voice vote a new bill to promote national adoption of a health information technology infrastructure that would provide incentives to practices that exchange information electronically.

To read more about the bill, visit [http://energycommerce.house.gov/Press\\_110/110nr324.shtml](http://energycommerce.house.gov/Press_110/110nr324.shtml).