

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### PHYSICIAN NOTES: Solo Practices Fall Short With Heart-Attack Treatments

#### Is your doctor working well with others?

When it comes to preventing future problems and treating chronic ailments, individual practice associations lag behind integrated medical groups, a new study says.

The close collaboration and centralized decision making in integrated medical groups may be behind the better quality of care, according to the study, *-Do Integrated Medical Groups Provide Higher-Quality Medical Care than Individual Practice Associations?-* The study appeared in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

In a related *Health Affairs* article, researchers say heart-attack patients don't fare as well when receiving treatment from a solo physician practice as opposed to a larger practice.

Studying more than 116,000 patients' records, researchers from **Arizona State University** discovered that heart-attack patients receiving treatment from attending solo practitioners were less likely to have cardiac catheterization and angioplasty within 24 hours of a hospital admission and more likely to die than other patients in the same hospital, the article says.

One-day angioplasty rates for larger physician practice's patients were 10 to 26 percent higher and one-day catheterization rates were 10 to 12 percent higher than patients attended by physicians from solo practices, the researchers reveal.

#### In other news:

- The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** awarded a contract for its electronic data center (EDC) for claims processing to **Companion Data Services**, a subsidiary of **Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina**, and **Electronic Data Systems**.

- Miami appears to be ground zero for health care fraud prosecutions right now. A jury found physician **Frantz Achille** guilty of conspiracy and health care fraud. Achille was a physician at two Miami HIV/AIDS clinics and allegedly forged medical paperwork to receive \$2.1 million from Medicare. Patients either never needed the expensive treatments or never received them. The clinic paid patients a kickback to show up, prosecutors said.

Also, Miami physician **Julian Torres** was arrested Jan. 30, charged with conspiracy and other federal crimes. The owners of **Carob Medical Services** allegedly paid \$20,000 in kickbacks to Torres to prescribe medical equipment for patients who didn't need it. Carob received around \$1 million from Medicare for this equipment.

Finally, **Diana Sotto**, owner of All **Medical Billing Systems**, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, followed by three years' supervised release. She helped Miami clinic **Project New Hope** defraud Medicare of more than \$2.8 million from Sept. 2004 to Sept. 2005, billing for HIV/AIDS medications for patients who actually were HIV-positive but didn't receive the medication.