

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PHYSICIAN NOTES: U.S. Faces Primary Care Physician Shortage Within 14 Years

Former WHO head faces fraud charges

To meet the United States- growing health care needs, the number of primary care physicians will need to increase by 39 percent by the year 2020, according a report the **American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)** released on Sept. 27.

-Researchers from the **University of Utah School of Medicine** and the **Utah Medical Education Council** analyzed current needs for primary care services in each state and projected future needs based on expected growth in each state's population, the age of state residents, the age of current primary care providers in the state and other factors,- the AAFP reports.

Taking into account all these factors, researchers discovered that the number of primary care physicians will need to increase by: 79 percent in Nevada, 76 percent in Arizona, 63 percent in Florida, 52 percent in Texas and 51 percent in Iowa.

- It's not only fly-by-night doctors who face fraud charges. The government has charged **Turan Itil**, a former chairman of the **World Health Organization** who has written hundreds of scientific articles about Alzheimer's disease, with Medicare fraud. The feds say Itil falsely diagnosed Alzheimer's disease and received payments for unnecessary services. In one case, a patient only had high blood pressure, but Itil allegedly billed for -numerous tests- based on a false Alzheimer's diagnosis, according to the New York Times.

- Southern California physician **Aziz Awad** will have company in prison. A court found both Awad and his biller, **Herman Thomas**, guilty of defrauding Medicare and Medicaid. They allegedly billed Medicare \$7 million for respiratory therapy services that weren't necessary, performed properly, or performed at all. Prosecutors said Awad and Thomas targeted mentally ill residents of board and care facilities and provided them with respiratory care services whether they needed them or not. Awad will serve 15 years in prison, and Thomas has yet to be sentenced, Lawfuel reports.

- Prosecutors indicted Freehold Township, NJ pain management doctor **Frederic Feit** for defrauding insurers and health programs for \$589,000. Feit allegedly billed for nerve block injections when he only provided patients with less-invasive shots of morphine or Demerol.

- The House and Senate adjourned without agreeing on legislation to encourage your office to implement health information technology.