

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Reader Question: Can I Share PHI With Another Doctor?

Question: Our physician wants to talk to a specialist about a patient's condition. He is planning to discuss the patient's history and current diagnosis over the phone. I told the physician he needs the patient's permission before he can discuss the case but he says I'm wrong. Can you advise?

Answer: The physician is correct—you do not need the patient's permission. "The Privacy Rule does not require you to obtain a signed consent form before sharing information for treatment purposes," the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) says in its Fast Facts for Covered Entities document. "Health care providers can freely share information for treatment purposes without a signed patient authorization."

Of course, if you are talking on the phone, you must still meet the regulations set out in the privacy rule to ensure that only the two physicians can hear the information being discussed. Make sure no one can overhear the doctor's conversation and that the call is taking place on a secure line.