

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Reimbursement: Docs Could Receive \$600 Million More in 2005

MedPAC tells Congress current physician payments are "adequate"

Patients aren't dropping dead on the streets because physicians are refusing to take on Medicare cases.

So says the **Medicare Payment Advisory Commission** in its March report to Congress. Roughly 97 percent of patients felt they had decent access to care in 2002, much the same as in 2000 and 2001. And doctors are taking Medicare assignment in record high numbers.

So MedPAC concludes that current physician payments are "adequate." But the commission still advises a bigger pay hike next year for physicians than the 1.5 percent currently provided. Instead, MedPAC urges Congress to boost physician payments by the rise in their input costs minus 0.9 percent -- or a net increase of 2.6 percent. This could spell between \$200 million and \$600 million extra for physicians next year.

MedPAC also recommend similar increases for ESRD care.