

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

What About 'Meaningful Use?'

Check out CMS's Final Rule to get the scoop on meaningful use requirements

Ever since CMS representatives began talking about the electronic health record (EHR) incentive program, they've been tossing around the phrase "meaningful use," but many practices are still unclear of what that means. Fortunately, CMS elucidated the mystery behind meaningful use last month, and you can investigate the facts on the agency's Web site.

Background: The maximum \$44,000 per-physician incentive bonus connected to use of EHRs is only available to "meaningful users" of the technology. CMS administrators spent months working on a concrete definition of meaningful use, and last month announced the specific requirements that practices would have to meet to qualify.

Practices who intend to qualify as meaningful users will have to use a certified EHR in a meaningful manner (e.g.: e-Prescribing), use the EHR to electronically exchange health information to improve quality of health care, and use the EHR to submit clinical quality and other measures, the CMS Web site indicates.

In addition, meaningful users will need to meet a core group of required objectives, plus all but five objectives from a separate "menu of procedures," CMS indicates on its Web site. The core set of meaningful use objectives includes 15 bullet points that you'll have to meet, including the following (among others):

- Record demographics
- Maintain an up-to-date problem list
- Record smoking status for patients 13 and older
- Implement drug-drug and drug-allergy interaction checks

After meeting the core requirements, eligible professionals will also have to meet several elements from the menu set listing, which includes the following options, among others:

- Implement drug formulary checks
- Send reminders to patients for preventive and follow-up care (based on patient preference)
- Submit electronic immunization data to immunization registries or immunization information systems.

For more information on how to meet the meaningful use criteria, visit www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/