

MOA MEMBERS
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Claims Paid Under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule - News From CMS

To the extent possible, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is working with Congress, health care providers, and the beneficiary community to avoid disruption in the delivery of health care services and payment of claims for physicians, non-physician practitioners, and other Fee-For-Service (FFS) providers of services paid under the Medicare physician fee schedule, beginning July 1. In this regard, CMS has instructed its contractors to hold these claims for the first 10 business days of July, for dates of service in July. This should have minimum impact on provider cash flow because, under current law, electronic claims are not paid any sooner than 14 days (29 days for paper claims) after the date of receipt. Meanwhile, all claims for services delivered on or before June 30 will be processed and paid under normal procedures.

After 10 business days, contractors will begin releasing claims into processing under the fee schedule which implements current law. This, of course, could result in claims being processed with the negative 10.6 percent update. If a new law is enacted which changes the negative 10.6 percent update, retroactive to July 1, CMS is prepared to automatically reprocess most of those claims which have already been processed.

Under the Medicare statute, Medicare pays the lower of submitted charges and the Medicare fee schedule amount. Claims with dates of service July 1 and later billed with a submitted charge at least at the level of the January 1-June 30, 2008, fee schedule will be automatically reprocessed if Congress retroactively reinstates the update that was in effect for that time period. Any lesser amount will likely require providers to re-submit a revised claim.

To the extent possible, providers may hold claims in-house until it becomes clearer as to whether new legislation will be enacted or until cash flow becomes problematic. This will reduce the need for providers to reconcile two payments (i.e., the initial claim and the reprocessed claim), and it will simplify provider billings of beneficiary coinsurance and payment calculations for payers which are secondary to Medicare.

In addition, be on the alert for more information about other legislative provisions which may affect Medicare FFS providers.