

To: Michigan Society of Pathologist
From: Gary S. Assarian, D.O.
Chairman, Michigan Society of Pathologists Provider Relations & Reimbursement Committee
Date: January, 2008
RE: Medicare Carrier Advisory Committee, Meeting held January 9, 2008

A number of items and issues were discussed at the local carrier advisory meeting held on January 9, 2008. Wisconsin physician services continues to be our Medicare administrator, however, Michigan's carrier is now based out of Chicago. The carrier medical director is:

Stephen Boren, M.D.,
WPS Medicare, 111 E.
Wacker Dr., Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60601
Stephen.boren@wpsic.com
Fax: (312) 228-6280
Phone: (312) 228-6254

The administrator for the program is:

Barbara Kahler BSN
WPS Medicare
111 E. Wacker Dr., Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60601
Barbara.kahler@wpsic.com
Fax: (312) 228-6280
Phone: (312) 228-6270

Much time was spent on all the resources available regarding education of both staff and physicians. Contacts with the provider outreach and education are:

J. David Bozarth
WPS Medicare
111 E. Wacker Dr., Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60601
j.david.bozarth@wpsic.com
Phone: (228-6246

Mark Kirchberg
WPS Medicare
1751 W. Broadway
Madison, WI 53713
mark.kirchberg@wpsic.com
Phone: (608) 301-2934

They are willing to help train you and your staff covering a variety of coding issues and Medicare compliance rules as well. They recommended that you review, "New Resident Physician Practice Guide" as a good reference and text. It could be used to train new personnel as well as to acquaint you with the Medicare program. I have contacted them in an attempt to obtain electronic copy to possibly post on our web site. I will keep the membership informed and promulgate how the copy of this text may be obtained.

A number of educational and informational sites were previewed. These providers' educational materials are located at:

Provider Education

WPS Medicare – Provider Education
http://www.wpsmedicare.com/part_b/education/education.shtml

Information regarding processes and rules for claims and policies at:

Wisconsin Physician Services (WPS) Medicare – Policies

Information regarding consultations is available at:

Consultations

WPS Consultation Article

http://www.wpsmedicare.com/part_b/policy/phys006.pdf

The NPI Resources

How to use the NPI Correctly for A & B

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE0725.pdf>

How to Use on new CMS 1500 & UB-04

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE0729.pdf>

The new Medicare rates were also listed:

Hospital Deductible: \$1024 / benefit period

Hospital Coinsurance:

Days 0-60: \$0

Days 61-90: \$256/day

Days 91-150: \$512/day

Skilled Nursing Facility Coinsurance

Days 0-20: \$0

Days 21-100: \$128/day

Part A Premium (for voluntary enrollees only):

With 30-39 quarters of Social Security coverage: \$233/month

With 29 or fewer quarters of Social Security coverage: \$423/month

Part B:

Deductible: \$135/year

Standard Premium: \$96.40/month

Our membership will face many challenges over the next few years regarding reimbursement and claims processing. The system as we knew it at one time is in a dynamic flux. The healthcare market is shifting not only at the provider level but in the fees obtained from those different payors.

As the population grows older the reliance on Medicare fees and processes will become more compelling. Under normal circumstances' pathology reimbursement at the Medicare fee screen would be a welcome event; however there are changes in this arena as well. The amount of the professional fees that are being paid is actually being reduced as was reported to the membership in the past. The outcomes of the competitive project will most likely lower the fees screens as well. In addition there are a number of insurance products that are being floated about that capitated. All this translates into the pressure downward to reduce the fees that are paid out. In addition they may lead to exclusion from these programs. This is where a united front to protect our membership is on critical importance. Fortunately the JVHL has been successful in capturing these contracts and although the fees that it pays are discounted the members are not excluded.

The future will certainly be interesting; the dynamics of health care will change with the VEBA contracts as well as the election of a new President. As health care dollars are stretched to the max the professionals are asked to do more with less. These challenges are being met by leadership within pathology at the local and national levels and remain important that we speak with one voice when seeking a fair and equitable resolution to our particular issues.

Should you have any questions regarding reimbursement or payment issues, please do not hesitate to contact the board.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary S. Assarian, D.O., FCAP