October 2006

NCDS update

A Quarterly Newsletter for Clients

Keeping your office up-to-date on industry and insurance changes, late-breaking billing & reimbursement news, and general inter-office communication…

Medicare Deductibles Increase Again

The Medicare Part B deductible for 2007 will be **$131**. This is a $7 increase over the 2006 deductible of $124. Medicare has informed all of their beneficiaries of this increase…

Streamlining the Process: *Electronic Remits*

For about 3 months now NCDS has been working with electronic remittance programs with those carriers that offer it (currently, Medicare, Paramount, UHC), and with the exception of just a few bumps in the road at the very start of the process it has been a pretty smooth transition converting to electronic remittance and posting.

The benefits of electronic remittance and advice programs are several:

No more cluttered storage of EOBs. A reduction in paper volume that your office staff has to manage, saving time and filing space.

Increased privacy with electronic remittance; paper EOBs would not be lying around the office for anyone to see. (If providers wish to view their electronic remits they can do so through our secured website.)

No chance of lost or misplaced paper EOBs, so no more time is wasted on the phone with a carrier requesting duplicate EOBs.

As they become available in the future, we will notify you of other carriers' electronic remittance capability, and supply you with the necessary forms and documentation for registration.

Medicare DIRECT DEPOSIT

Are you one of the few providers *still* receiving your Medicare payments by paper check in the mail? With Medicare's Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), your Medicare payments will be deposited directly into your bank account. You will receive your Medicare payments quicker, and the possibility of lost or misplaced checks is eliminated. This is a free service. So what are you waiting for?

We strongly encourage all providers to sign up for this valuable service. For your convenience, we have attached a Medicare (OH) EFT registration form to this newsletter: Just fill it out, sign it, attach a voided check, and mail it to the address on the form.

Flu Vaccine Reimbursement

Flu season is upon us and Medicare is encouraging its beneficiaries to get their flu shot. Medicare does provide coverage for the flu vaccine and its administration as a Part B benefit. Current Medicare (OH) pricing is as follows:

Flu vaccine (90658)…… $12.06
Administration of Flu vaccine (G0008)…….. $17.77
Pneumococcal vaccine (90732)……$27.03
Admin. of Pneumococcal vaccine (G0009)……..$17.77

Please note that the *intranasal* Flu vaccine (90660) is NOT COVERED by Medicare.

The Value of Good Information

❝ I would like to share with you a couple of stories regarding incomplete patient registration information. It is about two different patients at two different provider offices…both patients ultimately ended up in third-party collections.

The first patient was un-insured. *This patient filled out her name and address on her registration but no phone number was given. She indicated that she was employed but no employer info was noted. She did not list any other individual as the responsible party. The insurance fields were left blank. This patient had an office visit and then 2 weeks later received surgery. She paid no money at the time of service. Statements and letters were mailed to her, and after 4 months the account was turned over to collections. The collection agency is still unable to locate the patient to collect her balance.*

The second patient did have insurance. *A copy of her insurance card was made at the office and attached to her registration. However, when the patient filled out her demographic information, she wrote only "MMOH" in the insurance field and left blank the remaining fields for ID# and subscriber info. Because the insurance card showed someone other than the patient as the policy subscriber and in the ID# field was typed "USE SUBSCRIBER SSN," when NCDS received the registration we were unable to enter a valid ID# (Medical Mutual will not give out ID numbers if the provider does not supply a valid SSN). Therefore, we were unable to submit the claim. This patient had 2 office visits and a surgery billed to her account. Five months later, after multiple statements and several phone calls to the patient by our office, with no response from the patient, she was approved for collections. The patient now feels she should not have been sent to collections, that the problem is yours and ours, and she is without accountability, because she "has insurance."*

The point here is that a number of people did an abundance of work (office staff, physicians, coders, customer service, collection agencies) for little or no revenue. ***All because the patient deemed it unnecessary or inconvenient to thoroughly complete a patient registration form.*** *And unfortunately, these two examples are not uncommon scenarios.*

Such hassles can be alleviated by having a completed patient registration form on file. The patient registration form is critical to ensuring providers will receive reimbursement for their services. Phone numbers, Social Security numbers, employer names, responsible party names, insurance ID numbers, subscriber info are all vital details and should not be left blank.

Keep in mind these two scenarios the next time a patient is reluctant to fill out all of the information on their registration. It could be a sign of problems down the road. ❞

Thank you,
Michael J. Polo
NCDS Operations Manager

Coding questions?

Physicians with coding questions are encouraged to contact Susan Hunt, our senior coder. Susan is one of our certified coders and she regularly attends advanced courses and seminars in multiple specialties. She will be happy to answer your questions and can be reached at (888) 876-8833 or you can email her directly at susans@ncdsinc.com.

NCDS Website a Success!

Since its recent upgrades, the NCDS website has experienced an incredible jump in web traffic. In addition to the many billing inquiries we've been receiving via email, we are now receiving online payments from patients on a daily basis!

Many of you (our clients) are also taking advantage of the online conveniences offered and downloading your monthly reports off our website.

We Would Like Your Feedback! We are continuously working on improvements and enhancements to our website to make it easier for you and your patients to conduct business with us. Please let us know what you like and what you don't like and what ideas you may have for making it better.

DID YOU KNOW?

Court Costs on Collection Accounts:

If you approve legal action on a balance you sent to collections but the case is unsuccessful and does not result in recovery of funds, you could be responsible for paying the court costs out of your own pocket.

Quick Note: **Patient Payment Information**

If your patient mails you a payment for a copay from a prior date of service, do not record that as a "C=copay" payment type on your logsheet. It should be recorded as an "O=on-account" payment type. This will aid in more accurate posting of your patients' payments.

CREDIT CARD SWIPERS

If your office does not yet have a credit card swiper and wishes to order one through NCDS please call Mick Polo or Dave Polo at (888) 876-8833.