

Medicare EMC processing update: As I stated in a memo last month, we submit as many claims as possible electronically. With the new HIPAA requirements, we have had to modify our software to remain compliant. We were able to have all the required modifications completed prior to the deadlines. Unfortunately, the coordination between the claims clearinghouse (THIN) and Medicare was less successful. We have been in constant communications with both parties trying to help them determine where the problems are, but have continued to be very frustrated. There is a beacon of light at the end of the tunnel. THIN has now stated "We have determined that the problem is ours (THIN's) and our programmers are working on the solution." Of course they cannot give us an estimated date of completion. In the mean time, we have resorted to submitting all Medicare claims on paper forms. Unfortunately, paper claims are processed much slower than electronic claims. We will continue to 'hold their feet to the fire' until the situation is resolved.

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Phone Numbers: Please help us out. When giving out our phone number to patients who have a question about their bill, please use the following numbers. They ring directly into the billing department so they will be helped faster.

360 613-1627 or 800-238-9398

When you call our office, you may use the numbers above or our main phone numbers below.

360-692-5242 or 800-585-5242 360-698-4968 Fax

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Regional Fee Schedule: By now you have probably heard that Medicare will be implementing a Regional Fee Schedule which for many of our clients will result in a higher (although temporary) reimbursement level for Medicare claims. The effective date is supposed to be July 1st, although personally I doubt if the Medicare carriers will be able to make the changes by that time. It will require them to determine a new rate for every ambulance provider combining a portion of their old fee schedule, a portion of the National Fee Schedule and a portion of the new Regional Fee Schedule. Right....We will be monitoring the process and provide more information next month.

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Speaking of next month, it is my intent to try to provide useful and timely information each month in this forum. If you have any specific topics you would like to see addressed, let me know.

Some of the upcoming topics are:

ALS Assessments

BLS transports in an ALS Ambulance

Billing for non-transport
Mileage documentation
Condition Codes

Signatures
Rural mileage reimbursement
Transports if not medically necessary