



MEDICAL MANAGER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>What is PQRI?</i>	2
<i>PQRI FAQs</i>	2
<i>PQRI How To</i>	2
<i>Contracts</i>	3
<i>Fee Schedules</i>	3
<i>Privacy Act</i>	3
<i>HR Updates</i>	4

9 questions for 2009

- Do you know what PQRI is and are you participating?
- Have you called us to update your fee schedules with our current fee analyzer?
- Is your HR paperwork up to date?
- Do you need to review your insurance contracts?
- Are there new privacy laws that affect your practice?
- Does your office need to consider electronic records?
- Are your out of date billing and coding procedures affecting your cash flow?
- What other new developments are you unaware of?
- How can MD Alliance Billing, LLC help you?

NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS

The year 2009 is underway, and we at MD Alliance Billing, LLC hope that this will be the best year ever for your medical practice.

In this issue of Medical Manager, we will be addressing some important issues and new developments that you need know about as we kick off the new year. Making sure you are aware of changes in laws that affect medical professionals and implementing updates for your office procedures are critical steps to ensure a successful year. MD Alliance Billing, LLC wants to be your partner in this process.

We hope the articles in this issue are helpful and informative. We have addressed several new developments and offered tips and advice on making sure your office is up to date for the new year. Pay particular attention to the discus-

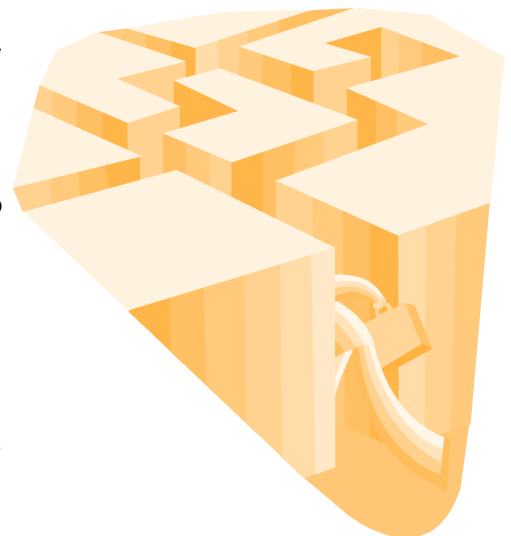
sion of the PQRI (Physician Quality Reporting Initiative), a new program designed to help encourage medical offices to participate in a voluntary quality reporting program with Medicare. This program is providing bonus payments for participation—you will want to know about it.

We also want to encourage you to contact our office for individualized attention and assistance. We can help you through the maze of medical office management and guide you towards achieving your financial goals. An organized and efficient office allows you to focus on being a physician and to serve your patients better. Your patients are happier, your claims are processed

quickly and correctly, and your cash flow is increased.

We hope you have a wonderful and productive 2009, and we look forward to meeting and working with you this year!

Cloe Sill, President
MD Alliance Billing, LLC



GETTING OFF TO THE RIGHT START

The new year is always an opportunity to reexamine, reevaluate, and implement changes. What's true in life is also true for your medical practice.

Make 2009 the most productive and efficient year ever by taking time now to

assess your office's financial and organizational situation. Consider the areas we have highlighted in this newsletter in addition to other issues which might uniquely affect your practice. Meet with your staff and outline any changes you feel are necessary. Making sure every-

one is on the same page now will ensure that you progress through the year as a team. Getting your office off to the right start can make the difference this year.

“PQRI is designed to reward physicians who are succeeding in caring for their patients.”

“PQRI is paving the way for other pay-for-performance initiatives. Get in on it now.”

*“Visit Medicare’s PQRI website for more information:
www.cms.hhs.gov/pqri.”*

PHYSICIAN QUALITY REPORTING INITIATIVE (PQRI)

The 2006 Tax Relief and Health Care Act (TRHCA) required the establishment of a physician quality reporting system for services and patients covered by the Medicare program. This reporting system includes incentive payments for eligible professionals who provide satisfactory reports on certain quality measures. In plain English, this means the government will pay you for reporting on your treatments and/or the results of those treatments for certain conditions and procedures. Many of the approved measures have to

do with preventative care or treatments designed to prevent reoccurrences of the condition. During the 2009 reporting period (January 1–December 31, 2009), eligible professionals who meet the criteria for satisfactory submission of quality measures data will earn a bonus payment of 2% of their total allowed charges for the procedure. Detailed information on how PQRI works and how to implement a PQRI system in your office can be found at the Medicare website, <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI/>.



Doctors all over the country are already getting paid under this new law, and you should be, too. PQRI is designed to reward physicians who are succeeding in caring for their patients.

PQRI FAQ

Who is eligible to participate?

- Any medical professional whose services are paid under or based on the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule. Basically if you bill Medicare directly, you are eligible.

What services are eligible?

- See Medicare’s website for a comprehensive list

of covered measures and reporting requirements for covered services.

How do we submit the reports?

- There is a coding system for the quality measures provided by CMS that is to be reported with all claims submitted to Medicare.

How do I know which measures are specific to my specialty and practice?

- Your professional organization or specialty association should be able to guide you. Many associations already have PQRI information on their websites.

Why should I participate?

- PQRI is paving the way for other pay-for-performance initiatives. Get in on it now.

HOW DO I IMPLEMENT PQRI?

The first step in implementing a PQRI reporting system for your office is to familiarize yourself with the information provided by Medicare’s website, <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI/>. The Educational Resources section has particularly helpful and relatively simple guides on how to begin coding and submitting these reports on your Medicare claims.



Eligible professionals do not have to enroll or file an intent to participate in PQRI. Physicians who choose to submit the data through claims can simply report the appropriate codes on the service lines of Part B of the PFS claim. In addition, there are several registries which have qualified to submit data for their participating physicians. See Medicare’s website for a comprehensive list, or contact our office for assistance.

INSURANCE CONTRACTS—TIME TO RENEGOTIATE

Are you getting paid what you should be by the insurance companies? Many physicians are not, and that's why the beginning of the year is a critical time to reevaluate and, if necessary, renegotiate your insurance contracts. Here are some simple tips to begin the process:

- Research Your Revenues—Find out what your average income per visit is for each insurance company. Our office can assist you by auditing your EOB's and payment vouchers.
- Find the Problem Payers—Compare average revenues and identify which companies are not reimbursing you at the same rate as the others. Know what the payments for your specialty and geographical area should be. With our up to date fee analyzer covering San Antonio, Fredericksburg, and Kerrville, we can assist you in discovering discrepancies.
- Re-read Your Contracts—Know what your insurance contracts say before you meet with a representative.
- Partner with your Patients—If necessary, let your patients know you will be dropping their insurance if the company does not negotiate. Get the patients on your team.
- Be Patient and Persistent—get what you deserve.



“The beginning of the year is a critical time to reevaluate and renegotiate your insurance contracts.”

FEE SCHEDULES—ARE YOU UP TO DATE?



Making sure you are current and competitive with your fee schedules is critical your success.

There are several helpful tools and services we offer to ensure you are charging appropriately and receiving payment accordingly. Our up-to-date fee analyzer can give you information about what physicians in your geographical area and specialty are charging and where you stand in comparison. We can

also help you identify the CPT and diagnostic codes most used in your specialty and the reimbursement rates you should expect for those codes. This information is extremely helpful in renegotiating your insurance contracts. MD Alliance Billing, LLC can help update your fee schedules with our current fee analyzer tools.

“Making sure you are current and competitive with your fee schedules is critical to your success.”

WHAT'S NEW IN PRIVACY

HIPAA has recently released a new set of guidelines about how the HIPAA Privacy Act applies to electronic health information exchange. As more practices adopt Electronic Medical Records, new issues of patient information sharing and privacy will need to be addressed. The purpose of Health Information Organizations (HIO) is addressed in the latest guidelines as well.

HIOs are entities in charge of electronically distributing information between medical facilities covered by the HIPAA Privacy Act but are not themselves covered by it. However, because of the sensitive nature of the information being handled by a HIO, it is critical that privacy agreements are reached between all parties involved. The HIPAA website has some new, helpful tips on establishing agreements with

HIOs that still ensure provider and patient privacy and adherence to the HIPAA Privacy Act. Visit HIPAA's Health and Information Technology website at www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/hit/ for more information, FAQs, and other guidelines on the electronic exchange of medical information.

Medical Manager Minute

Has your office considered switching to an Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system? Did you know that fewer than 10% of American hospitals and only 16% of private physician's offices are using EMR, in spite of studies showing revenue gains after implementation? New wireless technologies have made EMR safer and easier to use. Several companies offer EMR programs that can interface with other office management software such as Microsoft Windows. Consider whether your practice could benefit from EMR, and contact our office for assistance in selecting an EMR program that's right for you.

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HR UPDATES AND TAX TIPS

What should you be doing now in the areas of Human Resources and tax filing? Check out these tips below:

- Download the current Employer's Tax Guide (Publication 15) from www.irs.gov.
- Make sure you have furnished all employees with completed W2 or 1099 forms.
- Request new W4 & I-9 forms from any employee who claimed exemption from income tax withholding last year. W4 exempt forms expire on February 16, 2009.
- File any additional tax forms as necessary by the appropriate deadlines—see your tax guide for more details.
- Are you e-filing? The IRS



offers more and more opportunities to file and pay federal taxes electronically. Check out how at www.irs.gov or www.bookkeepingtaxplus.com.

- Make sure you are not only taking care of the business side of HR, but the human side as well.

Meet with your employees for a 2008 review and a 2009 planning session. Assess the successes and failures of the previous year and set realistic, attainable goals for 2009. These could include implementation of a PQRI system, investigation into Electronic Medical Records, renegotiation of any ineffective insurance contracts, and cost control implementation.

- Questions? Contact our office at 830-257-2590, and we would be happy to assist you with any HR needs.