



AAFP News: AAFP Edition

Policy and Health Issues in the News

Physicians Get One-Year ICD-10 Grace Period

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) says it will provide greater flexibility during the transition to the *International Classification of Diseases*, 10th revision (ICD-10) code set, giving physicians a one-year grace period to incorporate changes sought by primary care physicians. When CMS introduced plans for ICD-10, some physicians expressed concern that moving to a new set of codes required additional time for staff training and that the possibility of mistakes was too great to implement more than 68,000 codes quickly. CMS subsequently took steps to ensure that physicians do not summarily receive claims denials or audits for making mistakes in coding. During the grace period, Medicare claims will not be denied, and claims will not be audited based on coding, as long as the physician submits an ICD-10 code from an appropriate family of codes. In addition, physicians who participate in CMS quality programs such as the Physician Quality Reporting System, the value-based payment modifier initiative, or meaningful use of electronic health records will not be penalized during the 2015 reporting year for failure to select a specific code, as long as they have selected one from an appropriate family of codes. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/practice-professional-issues/20150707icd10transition.html>.

Physicians Dodge Medicare Pay Cut

Primary care physicians avoided another potential pay cut when the House and Senate agreed to remove a proposed Medicare payment reduction from trade legislation that recently became law. The Trade Preferences Extension Act initially included a 0.25% Medicare payment cut that would have been in effect from October 2024 to March 2025. The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) wrote to legislators to argue against the cuts. Changing the bill's language was an uphill battle given the momentum behind the legislation. When the Senate debated the bill, which was meant to aid workers who could be displaced by trade policies, legislators inserted the additional payment cut, which had not been part of earlier budget proposals. The bill was then approved by the Senate Finance Committee and subsequently passed the full Senate. But in an unusual turn of events, the House removed the additional Medicare cut and passed its own version of the bill. The Senate eventually approved the revised version, and President Obama signed the bill into law on June 29. Medicare payments to physicians already had been cut by 2% through 2024 as part of budget legislation passed in

2011 and later extensions. The cut that was averted would have reduced Medicare spending by an additional \$700 million. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/government-medicine/20150706tradebill.html>.

Leadership Skills Drive Residency Changes

New research about how to prepare family medicine residencies for the future highlights five key leadership actions necessary to successfully redesign the programs. The authors of an article in the June 2015 issue of the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* challenged residency program leaders to learn how to manage change, develop financial acumen, adapt best-evidence educational strategies to their local environments, create and sustain a vision to engage stakeholders, and demonstrate courage and resilience. They noted that although residency programs “routinely undertake minor programmatic revisions, significant transformations in training require leadership—another area where physicians typically do not receive training.” These latest research efforts build on what was learned from the Preparing the Personal Physician for Practice project, an effort undertaken from 2007 to 2012 that aimed to help family medicine residency programs identify the changes necessary to keep pace with a health care system speeding toward the patient-centered medical home practice. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/education-professional-development/20150706redesignresidencies.html>.

AAFP Teams with NFL Foundation to Raise Awareness About Concussions

The AAFP has partnered with the National Football League (NFL) Foundation to deliver concussion-related safety and assessment tools to family physicians, their patients, and the general public. The initiative will produce free webinars for family physicians, as well as patient education materials, which will be mailed to all active AAFP members in August. These materials are intended to help patients identify the signs and symptoms of concussion, know when to seek medical evaluation, understand concerns about long-term brain health in athletes, and understand the limitations of protective equipment. For more information, go to http://blogs.aafp.org/cfr/leadervoices/entry/aafp_teams_up_with_nfl.

— AAFP AND AAFP NEWS STAFF

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