



## Curbside Consult

COLIN BALL

**Q:** *Every January, my cash flow decreases because our billing manager holds Medicare claims throughout the month so we won't get hit with the annual Part B deductible (\$135 for 2008). Is there any way to avoid this?*

**A:** Delaying claims for January services on Medicare patients is a popular tactic used by many practices. The downside to this approach is the negative impact to your cash flow along with the eventual

annual Medicare deductible is not much different than for other payers' deductibles and may actually be a little easier since the same amount applies to all Part B recipients.

If you are not currently performing this function, you have only a few weeks to get these processes up and running before incurring extra patient statement costs and potentially losing out on the collection of these deductibles. A few helpful tips to assist in the collection of the Medicare deductible:

- Run future appointment reports for Medicare patients to be seen in January and incorporate the verification of Medicare into your current IV process.
- Ensure your staff is advising Medicare patients of the need to bring payment for the deductible during all appoint-

until the middle of February (determine when to stop by the proportion of patients who indicate they have met their deductible).

- When performing Medicare IV, ensure your staff is requesting whether the patient has met their deductible for 2008.
- Throughout the months of January and February, run utilization reports on Medicare patients seen since 1/1/08 to compare against your future appointment reports so you won't request the deductible from a patient when it was already collected.
- Offer to collect the deductible by credit/debit card during the appointment reminder call to get it out of the way prior to the visit

Other Collection Reminders:

- Any patient balances past due and not collected during the appointment reminder call should be collected from the patient prior to treatment.
- If the patient is unable to pay any portion of their past due balance due prior to treatment, the appointment should be rescheduled until they are able to satisfy their obligation, or a payment plan should be executed with a signed promissory note.

## When IV is performed daily and completely, the collection process for the annual Medicare deductible is not much different than for other payers' deductibles.

hit of some deductibles anyway when the claims are finally billed. It also masks a larger issue facing many practices today: the lack of a complete Insurance Verification (IV) process including collection of all patient due balances prior to treatment. When IV is performed daily and completely, the collection process for the

ment reminder calls.

- If you are in Primary Care, plan on collecting the deductibles for all Medicare patients seen in the first two weeks of January. After mid-January, your staff should verify with the patient during the scheduling call if they have been seen by any Part B provider in 2008

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Colin Ball is a revenue management consultant with the public accounting firm of Gregory, Sharer & Stuart in St. Petersburg; 727-821-6161; or [cball@gsscpa.com](mailto:cball@gsscpa.com).