



OSMA News *Now*

*The Latest News, Views, Updates, and Information for Physicians
from the Oklahoma State Medical Association*

May 13, 2010

Medicare Duck Ready to Quack—Again!

Ken King, CAE, OSMA Executive Director

How much longer Congress continues muzzling the Medicare SGR duck to keep it from quacking is now anyone's guess. The Congressional duck tape was used once again on April 15 when it once again postponed a 21 percent physician payment reduction until June 1 – rather than find a true solution to fix the reimbursement problem.

As we heard from the AMA, the provision that froze Medicare payment rates at the previous 2010 level until June 1 was contained in HR 4581, legislation that extended federal unemployment benefits. The vote was 58-34 in the Senate and 289-112 in the House and the President immediately signed the bill. This is the *third time* since last December that Congress delayed the payment cut just before the duck quacked.

So, is there anything we can do to move Congress to permanently fix the SGR? Never give up: we need to get Oklahoma physicians and their patients involved. “We need to engage all physicians, their families, their patients, and their office staffs in our state to join our million-signature petition drive now,” said OSMA President K. A. Mehta, MD.

Signing the Petition is easy and quick: go to www.okmed.org and click on the Medicare Meltdown link. It takes less than one minute!

As of early May, more than 70,000 signatures were on the petition that urges Congress to abolish Medicare's Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula and preserve senior citizens' and military families' access to care. We need more signatures. Fifty-one state medical associations and 14 national specialty societies are promoting the petition that asks Congress to “Stop the Medicare Meltdown” and develop “a rational Medicare physician payment system that automatically keeps up with the cost of running a practice and is backed by a fair, stable funding formula.”

The sad truth is that this behavior by Congress is a repeat of a decade-long pattern of proposed Medicare payment cuts and last-minute Congressional band-aid action to postpone them. Instead of a permanent resolution, Congress continually opts for temporary fixes.

When they tell us, “oh yeah, that payment formula needs to be fixed—don't worry—we'll take care of that.” Just remember—another duck-tape SGR fix to Medicare won't work—if it walks and talks like a duck. . . it will quack like a duck too.

Legislative Update: 14 Days and Counting

With just two weeks left in the legislative session, this is where the rubber really hits the road for Oklahoma lawmakers. By far the biggest issue is the state budget, from which lawmakers must cut nearly \$1.2 billion. Budget negotiations between House and Senate leadership and the governor's office have reportedly made some progress, but no deal has been finalized and a variety of competing interests are slowing down the process.

There are still a handful of bills relevant to OSMA members that are still alive, most notably legislation to help create the liability indemnity fund needed for a \$400,000 cap on noneconomic damages to take effect (SB 2163) and to rein in the ability of licensure boards and other regulatory agencies to expand the scopes of practice for their licensees (HB 3311).

This is a crazy time at the Capitol (yes, more so than usual) so things can happen very quickly. Watch for updates from OSMA as things progress over the next two weeks.

Hold the Date for the CMS 2010 ICD-10/5010 National Provider Conference Call

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will host a national provider conference call on “ICD-10 Implementation in a 5010 Environment”

When: Tuesday, June 15, 2010
Time: 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EST
Target Audience: Medical coders, physician office staff, provider billing staff, health records staff, vendors, educators, system maintainers and all Medicare fee-for-service (FFS) providers

The following topics will be discussed during the presentation:

ICD-10

- ICD-10 implementation for services provided on and after October 1, 2013
- Benefits of ICD-10
- Differences between ICD-10 and ICD-9-CM codes
- Tools for converting codes – General Equivalence Mappings (GEMs)
- Proposal to freeze ICD-9-CM and ICD-10 code updates except for new technologies and diseases

HIPAA Version 5010

- General Overview HIPAA version 5010 and D.0 and who is impacted
- Compliance dates
- Benefits
- 5010 scope versus ICD-10 Scope
- What you need to do to prepare
- Timelines
- Medicare FFS implementation of HIPAA version 5010 and D.0
- Impact on paper claim forms

This toll-free teleconference will include a question and answer session that will give call participants an opportunity to ask questions of CMS subject matter experts.

Registration information for this national provider conference call will be announced soon, so hold the June 15th date now for this informative provider conference call.

Additional information about ICD-10/5010 can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/ICD10> on the CMS website.

COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES

If you are interested in serving on an OSMA Council or Committee, please contact Donna Bartlett at the OSMA at 405.601.9571 or Bartlett@okmed.org.

OSMA Calendar

MAY

19	OKC Medical Group Management Association	11:00 am
19	OSMA Health (MO)	5:30 pm

JUNE

02	CME Planning Committee	6:00 pm
03	Executive Committee	6:00 pm