

Stratford Notes

NEIC is the largest clearinghouse for private electronic claims. Stratford was listed in their latest newsletter as one of only 3 companies in the United States that can transmit to them in the ANSI 837 format. If you want to transmit to NEIC, now is the time to get on our list. We still have a backlog of people waiting for approval, but we should be completely caught up in March. We are going to be at their national meeting in San Diego, California in March to hear about the coming changes in EDI.

Our new expanded customer support formally began the last day of January and it seems to be working well. Our prepaid support customers may use an 800 number. A few people have reported being on hold for 15 minutes or more. This should almost never happen after a couple of months. Please report any problems that you have. The best way to report anything directly to us is by fax (650) 692 1073 or E-Mail (See our Internet and CompuServe addresses at the end of this newsletter). Our fax server prints constantly throughout the day so your messages are available to us here in our main offices immediately.

Stratford is growing faster than ever now. We have nearly 2400 legal, licensed users. We are taking the necessary steps to automate the company so we can offer better service to many more customers. We have our support office in Seattle, Washington working and being trained now. Soon we will have our Atlanta, Georgia office working. Within a few months we will have the ability to "ramp up" to more than one thousand technical support people in a very short time. We believe the coming announcements by Medicare will require every doctor who has a system more than 3 years old to upgrade it or get a replacement. We have the lowest cost, comprehensive practice management package available. We believe most doctors will choose our software over other less complete packages. Our software will work equally

Today's Highlights

-A Note From Our President
-From the EDI (ECS) Corner.....
-Windows Tips
-Trends in computing
-New Manual
-Advanced Tip of the Month
-More About Windows NT
-Advanced Tip Of The Month
-Our 800 Number
-Our Internet address

well for a solo practitioner and a group of 50 or more providers. We have billing services with more than 100 customers. Many competing packages cost much more and they do not even have integrated EDI.

We had a good response to our announcement last month concerning the Medicare changes in EDI. If you missed the announcement you will probably receive a "stuffer" with your next check from Medicare. If you are transmitting in any of the formats that are more than 3 years old, you must change this year.

Our California customers who bill EDS for Medicaid patients are being required to change by June 1, 1995. If you have not been billing EDS and you want to begin now, you must bill in the ANSI 837 format. EDS will not even let you test in any of the old formats. We have passed every customer who was on our waiting list. We are ready to get the rest of you on the new format. Please fax your request when you are ready to start.

The writing is on the wall. If you are not transmitting your claims, now is the time to begin. We believe most private carriers will require electronic claims as soon as Medicare requires it. Write or fax to us....

Training Classes

SHS Software Basic Training

In the Stratford Classroom:

Every Friday	9:30 AM - 12:00 PM	\$95
	1:30 PM - 4:00 PM	\$95
By Appointment		\$95

Call for class availability at least three days in advance. On-site training with a certified Stratford trainer in your area may be available (*by appointment only*). The cost is \$250. Telephone training may also be available.

FROM THE EDI CORNER.....

Most of you get our newsletter each month so you probably got our February insert which announced the end of the old EDI formats. If you have been reading our newsletter for the past few years you know we have been predicting this day. HCFA (the Health Care Financing Administration in Washington DC) has given notice to all the many Medicare intermediaries that they may no longer accept claims in their proprietary (local) formats. The final date for accepting claims in the old formats is June 1, 1996. Soon after this date, your claims will be sent to a regional processing center in the same way the Internal Revenue handles its information processing. DME (Durable Medical Equipment) billers have been sending claims to a regional processing center for some time. It is estimated that by having all providers bill electronically in a "standardized" format, the Federal Government can save as much as 20 billion dollars in five years. This means that all providers will be required to change. The change may have some unpleasant aspects but as taxpayers we can appreciate the government's effort to save money. After the new processing center is operational for a while, we will all appreciate more efficient handling of our billing.

Stratford will run your office related classified ad in our monthly newsletter for *free*, upon SHS approval! Fax your ad to us at (650) 692-1073.

Most of our customers who started electronic billing after 1992 were put on the National Standard Format. This is one of the two formats that will be acceptable for transmitting claims after June 1, 1996. Recently we have been starting our new clients on the ANSI 837 format. We believe this format (or its successor) will eventually be the only acceptable format. There are many reasons for this. Claims transmitted using ANSI 837 take less time to transmit because it is a more compact format. This means lower telephone costs. It also means faster processing for the claims. This format can be used for all types of Healthcare billing. We are presently testing our UB92 claim information (Medicare part A or hospital billing) in the ANSI format. We are also testing our dental claim information in the ANSI format.

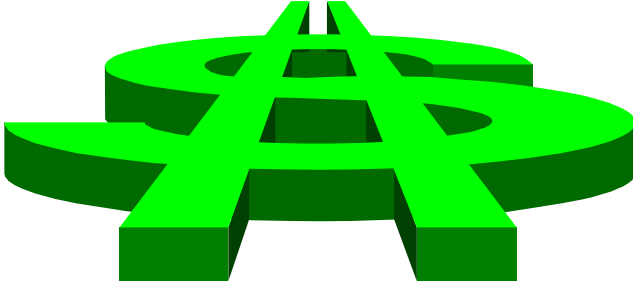
Here are some of the recent ANSI related trends in EDI: Aetna is accepting tests in the ANSI format for their Medicare program. Travelers is accepting claims in the ANSI format now. EDS is changing to the ANSI format for the California Medicaid program. Delta Dental is actively promoting its ANSI electronic claims program. We have many customers transmitting to NEIC at this time using the ANSI format. Of course, we have had customers transmitting to Medicare through Transamerica and Blue Shield for many months now.

We plan to convert all of our customers who use the old formats to ANSI when it is accepted in their state. If you are interested in changing to the ANSI format, please do not call. We cannot help you change by phone. We need something in writing from you so we can research it and schedule the change. We will be changing hundreds of customers in the coming months and we want to do it at no charge for those customers who subscribe to our software maintenance. We must schedule it.

California Healthcare Management

is running seminars in medical billing. The basic seminar for \$50 will be held Saturday, March 18 from 9am to 2pm. The advanced seminar for \$100 will be held Saturday, March 25, from 9am to 2pm.

To secure reservations, mail checks to:
CHM, 2130 Palmetto Ave, Pacifica, CA 94044
For further details call (650) 359-4195



Stratford will pay *you* \$100 for each unrelated person you refer who purchases SHS[®] Healthcare Management Software at full price (\$895). Call or write to us with your referral; we will take care of the rest!

WINDOWS TIPS

Q. We have an old computer system that we bought more than 4 years ago. Someone told us we need to upgrade if we want to use Microsoft Windows and have any of the thousands of great new programs that are available. We do not want to spend a lot of money or make too many changes, but we want our new computer to be ready for the new programs when we are ready. What do you recommend?

A. For a single user computer, we recommend getting a “486-66” processor and at least 8 Megabytes of memory and at least 340 Megabytes of hard disk storage. For networks, the answer is not as simple. We believe the best is a dedicated server with Microsoft Windows NT server 3.5. The server should be at least a “486-66” with 16 Megabytes of memory and at least 340 Megabytes of hard disk storage. For the workstations we recommend you spend money according to the needs of the user. If the user is only going to use our software and does not care about a mouse and Windows, then get 4 megabytes of memory. If the user will eventually want Windows, word processing, a network scheduling program and other programs, then get at least 8 megabytes of memory. Most computers are “field upgradeable”, so if you find you need more memory or hard disk storage you can get it later. If someone in the office can take the workstation to Comp USA or a nearby computer store, the upgrade is usually not very expensive. The important thing with a network is the wiring and installation. Network problems are the cause of many support questions for us. Most of them cannot be solved by a phone call.

Q. We have Microsoft Windows and we have seen the Mail and Schedule ICONs in the “network” window. What are they? Can we use them for scheduling in our office?

A. From your description, we can tell that you must have Windows for Workgroups 3.11. What you see is Microsoft Mail and Schedule that are installed with the version of Windows that you have. Yes, you can use them. You should have someone who is familiar with these programs set them up. It is very important to set up your “postoffice” properly. The scheduling program “sits on top of the mail program”. We have used Microsoft schedule here at Stratford for more than one year and we like it.

If you have a network, your mail program will enable you to send messages to other people who use your network. In the future, you will be able to link this mail program to the Internet. Your backup procedures must be modified to be sure your postoffice and calendars are backed up every day.

TRENDS IN COMPUTING

We recently got a replacement keyboard that works just like any other keyboard with one extra function. This keyboard has a telephone built into it. It has 3 connections. One connection is to the computer. The second connection is to the phone line. The third connection is to an ordinary handset like the one you have now or to a headset that is included. You also get software that runs under Windows. The software has an autodialer and can work with the cardfile that is part of Windows. It will track the length of the phone call automatically. You can still type while you are talking so you can take notes. There is a message associated with every call with starting and ending times.

One of the fastest growing segments of the computer marketplace is telephony or CTL. This means Computer Telephone Integration. In the upcoming version of Microsoft Windows there will be a technology named TAPI (Telephony Application Programming Interface). This will enable a low cost integration of your computer with your telephone. There are many possibilities for use in a Healthcare office. None of our customers could survive without the telephone. It is the primary link to the outside world for most businesses.

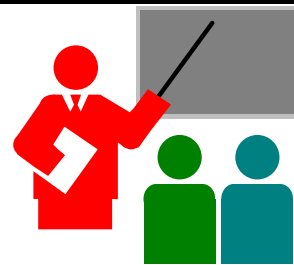


NEW MANUAL

This is an update. The new manual was delivered to the printer in mid February, so it is on schedule. We hope to have it available in March. As in the past, we will provide it at no charge if: (1) you subscribe to software support (2) you send your old manual with a request (3) you pay for the shipping. We have had customers send their manual to us with no identification. We have no way to know who sent it. Please staple a card or a copy of an old statement to identify it.

MORE ABOUT WINDOWS NT

After the article last month, we had some requests from some large groups for more information. If you are presently using a minicomputer or you have a large Novell network you should at least look at Windows NT. In the March issue of Windows Magazine there is an article about what Digital Equipment is doing with NT. For many years DEC has used "clusters" as a way to provide fault tolerance and improved performance for their VAX minicomputers. You can get mainframe performance using minicomputers. Now with NT clusters you will be able to get mainframe performance and features on microcomputers. This means that this type of power is available to medical offices. It is more than just power. It is reliability and other features that have not really been available on microcomputers.



ADVANCED TIP OF THE MONTH

CUSTOMIZING STATEMENTS

Q. I use the open-item statements. I would like some changes if possible. I would like to suppress the aging. I do not want the "account balance" to show at all. I want the amount they owe me, (not the account balance) to show in the boxes.

A. You need a "control file". The open-item statement is numbered 431 so you need a file named m6r431.ctl. You can get this file from us if you do not know how to make one. In this file you need the following switches:

stopsmtaging=yes This will stop the aging from appearing on your statement.

stopsmtbalance=yes This will stop the balance from appearing on your statement.

amtduenow=yes This will cause the amount due to appear at the bottom of the statement.

amtdueinbox=yes This will cause the amount due to appear in the boxes where the account balance usually prints.

There are several switches available that can customize your statements as well as other forms. If you have special needs, you should print a statement and put marks on it to indicate what you want. Fax it to us. Please do not call; we need to see it. If you call it is very unproductive. We need for you to put it in writing. That way, if the first person who sees it does not have a solution, he/she can easily get other support people to look at the problem.

Stratford Newsletter

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