

Stratford Notes

We are a full month into our expanded customer support now and there are some calling patterns we are noticing. We are working to change those things that have caused problems.

Our support hours are 8 AM to 5 PM PST as they have been since 1976. If you call at 5:01 PM the AT&T "switch" will tell you that the customer support ends at 5 PM and will not leave you on hold. If you call at 4:59 PM and get in the "hold queue", there is no way for the computer to break into your line and tell you. You will be stuck until the next morning if you want to stay on hold that long. We will be offering expanded hours for an additional fee at some time in the future. It will probably be available on a per-call basis.

Some people do not want to talk to the new people and they leave a message like: "have Tom call me." We must have a "problem" description and a solution for each call. Every call must be "closed". This information is being accumulated into a knowledge base that is part of an "expert system". The information "replicates" automatically among a number of computers all over the United States. When it reaches a "Notes Server" here at Stratford, it is available to our support group. We are the source for the expert information regarding our software, of course. Problems like printer, modem, phone line and operating system errors are not usually related to our software. Expertise for those problems may come from a different source. Presently the system is based on *Lotus Notes*. *Lotus Notes* is from Lotus Development Corporation (best known for *Lotus 123*). Many hospitals and large corporations are adopting "groupware" software products like this to manage incredible amounts of text information. Our goal is to answer your support question in the shortest possible time. All of this may seem like a bother at this time, but it will eventually lead to efficient and quick help. The sooner this system is developed the sooner you will get your answer when you call instead of waiting for a call back. This expert system will eventually be incorporated into our manual. It will also be offered as an on-line help system so that you can press F1 on your computer and get an answer without calling for the common problems. This will be a no-charge option in the future. It will be an option because it will take space on your hard disk and some of our customers will not have enough room.

We are doing our best to give you the most advanced product at the lowest possible cost. Your support calls are the single largest cost we have. This cost is reflected in

Highlights

-A Note From Our President
-From the EDI (ECS) Corner.....
-Automatic Insurance Rebilling
-Provider's Liability
-Medical Review of E/M Services
-Questions And Answers
-Faxing Is A Smart Way To Manage Time
-Medicare Provider Numbers and the IRS
-New Manual
-More On Windows NT
-Advanced Tip of the Month

your support fee. If we can reduce the number of calls, we can reduce our support fee. It is in everyone's best interest to do this. As we begin to collect accurate data from AT&T we will begin adjusting the monthly support fee to charge for usage. Those customers who need more than the average amount of support will be charged more than the average customers. We plan to monitor the usage in a "2 month window". This way, if you have a problem that takes awhile to solve, you will not be penalized if it only happens a couple of times per year.

Recently we were asked why we bother to create an invoice for \$2.35 shipping. Why don't we just include it in the monthly support? Our shipping bill is many thousands of dollars per month. Our books are audited by the state Board of Equalization and we must account for every cent. The invoice makes it easy to pass the cost to the customer that uses the service. Collecting and reporting sales tax is an extremely time-consuming and expensive task which doctors have not had to do (yet). There is talk in some states about requiring doctors to charge sales tax on some equipment and supplies that they provide.

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.

AUTOMATIC INSURANCE REBILLING

Apparently there are computer systems that do this and it is becoming a source of costly duplicate claims for insurance companies. It can delay payment on a claim that has already been processed for payment. A recent Blue Shield Plan newsletter has an article about this. All the plans have a toll free number to call for immediate claim status information. You should never rebill without a reason. To do so creates a duplicate that can delay your payment even more. It also creates extra paperwork for the provider's office staff.

FROM THE EDI CORNER.....

TRENDS

IMS of Southern California is beginning to accept medical claims in the ANSI 837 format. We believe they will begin taking dental claims in this format soon. Maryland Health Information Network (MHIN) is requiring all *new* submitters to use their new NSF specification. We are very close to being able to test transmitting dental claims in the ANSI 837 format directly to Delta Dental at least for the California Denti-Cal program. We believe we will be able to transmit private Delta Dental claims soon after the Denti-Cal claims are approved. Medicare does not allow its contractors (intermediaries) to offer toll free transmission to non-par providers. Blue Shield of Northern California will soon have a "916" area code to call as there was before the CompuServe program. NEIC (the largest clearinghouse for private claims) has already processed more than 1 million claims in the ANSI 837 format.

From the Internet: Washington DC has been described as a WORK FREE DRUG PLACE.

California Healthcare Management

is running seminars in medical billing. The basic seminar for \$50 will be held Saturday, April 29 and May 27 from 9am to 2pm. The advanced seminar for \$100 will be held Saturday, May 6 from 9am to 2pm. To secure reservations, mail checks to:
CHM, 2130 Palmetto Ave, Pacifica, CA 94044
For further details call (650) 359-4195

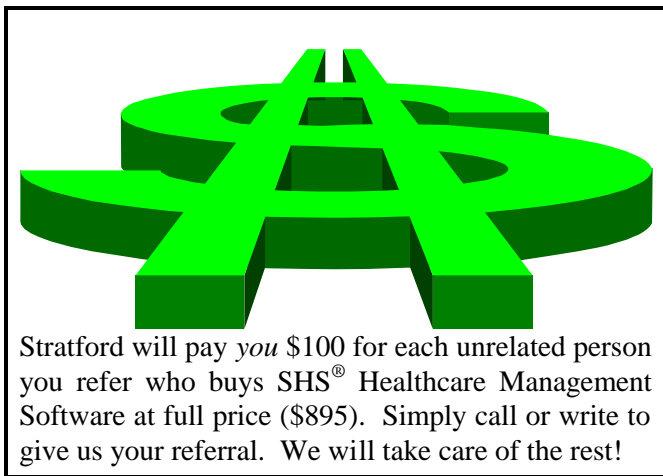
PROVIDER'S LIABILITY

Section 1879 of the Social Security Act states that if a provider does not verify the medical necessity of ordered tests, and the tests are subsequently determined to be not medically necessary, the provider may be held liable for payment. To avoid this, the provider must inform the beneficiary that Medicare may deny payment **prior** to ordering the service.

MEDICAL REVIEW OF E/M SERVICES

Since their introduction in 1992, Evaluation & Management CPT codes have not been included in the medical review process. Beginning in the summer of 1995 there will be a 3 month interval during which providers' billing patterns may be reviewed and further education can be offered in the use of E/M codes. Following this period, HCFA will instruct the intermediary to review the E/M claims. Providers must properly document each of the 3 components: **history**, **physical examination**, and **medical decision making**. The codes may not be used without this documentation.

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.



FAXING IS A SMART WAY TO MANAGE TIME.

Almost all of our customers have a fax machine. All hospitals have fax machines. All insurance companies have fax machines. The fax machine solves a very serious problem today. How do you get information to or from someone? Most of our phone calls last 3 to 20 minutes. Unless you are very lucky it is very unlikely that you will call and find someone sitting, doing nothing, waiting for your call. The problem is not having time. We have time. We almost never have any calls that wait overnight. The problem is matching the time that you want to talk with the time that a support person is free to talk. The fax solves this problem nicely. You send the fax anytime you want. We get it out of the printer when we are ready for the next call. If you send a "screen print" or other descriptive material, we can do some research before calling you. This takes much less of your time. If your fax says "Have Tom call Linda," then Tom may have no idea why Linda called. If Tom is on vacation for 2 weeks, we do not want Linda to wait 2 weeks. Can someone else take the call? To get the most out of your support contract, you should provide as much information as possible. *A picture is worth a thousand words.*

We also provide support and sales information by E-Mail. Very few of our customers have E-Mail now, but we believe this will be used more in the future. Netcom charges a flat fee for 40 hours of E-Mail. This should be enough for most people. If you send many faxes per day, it might be less expensive to send them on the Internet. CompuServe charges by the minute, so it will be at least as expensive as a fax and probably more.

MEDICARE PROVIDER NUMBERS AND THE IRS

Medicare is beginning to use the same mechanism as other payers for reporting payments to providers to the Internal Revenue.

Medicare has notified 1,600 providers that the IRS found a discrepancy with their provider file. The discrepancy usually is an incorrect name, tax id, address, etc. The provider has 30 days to resolve the situation. If the problem is not corrected within the 30 days, the IRS requires a 31% withholding until the problem is resolved.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. I have heard that you are designing a new version of your program for "Windows 95". Is that true and if it is, what does that mean to me? Will I be required to change my computer to use your new program?

A. The answer is maybe. First, we plan to continue to support the present "text graphics" program so you will not be required to use the new program. Second, the new program will be substantially the same as the present program. The only new features will be those that relate directly to the additional features offered by Windows 95.

Q. When will the new program for Windows 95 be ready?

A. It is impossible for a software company to know exactly when a new program will be ready to deliver. You can only get a time goal. We hope to have the new program available 30 to 120 days following the retail shipment of Windows 95. We should be able to meet this goal, since we have already had our present programs running with a beta copy of Windows 95. Of course, the present program does not have any direct links to the network mail and schedule programs and it does not have any pretty and colorful bitmap graphical "push buttons". It is impossible for a doctor to know exactly when a patient will get well. He/she only has past experience. If he/she has many patients with the same illness and many controllable factors, he/she will be more accurate. If his/her treatment is for different illnesses and depends on many factors out of his/her control, he/she will usually be less accurate. No one wants a software program before it is ready.



NEW MANUAL

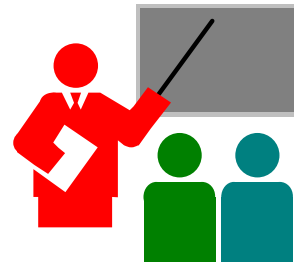
We have them. The price is \$9.95. As in the past, we will provide it at no charge if: (1) you subscribe to software support continuously (2) your account is fully paid each month (3) you send your old manual (we must have the front and back covers) with a request (4) you pay for the shipping. We have 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. You can put your 6 digit account number from your monthly statement on the cover and stamp your name. We have many customers with the same name. We do not want your manual to go to the wrong person!

MORE ON WINDOWS NT

NT is not the same as “regular” Windows or Windows 95. It is completely different. This is a far more powerful type of Windows.

In 1994, NT outsold any “flavor” of UNIX. In 1995 NT will outsell all UNIX versions combined. “Regular” Windows sells more copies in 1 month than all UNIX versions combined.

10% of all Fortune 1000 companies consider Windows NT a standard within their company. By 1996 that number will climb to 34%.



ADVANCED TIP OF THE MONTH

ELIMINATE DUPLICATE INSURANCE RECORDS

Q. I have some duplicate insurance companies. How can I combine them without going into every patient’s account?

A. The program will not allow you to delete insurance companies that are associated with patients. Follow these steps:

1. On a multi-user system, make sure all other users have quit the Stratford program.
2. From the Accounts Receivable Directory, choose 8 (File and System Management), 6 (Insurance Companies, Providers, etc.), 4 (Maintain the Insurance Company Names).
3. Enter the insurance company that you wish to keep and remember the *desired* code.
4. Highlight the first duplicate and press the letter C to change the Lookup Code to the *desired* code. Press [Ctrl+W]. Enter Y to lock the files. Enter Y for all other users must quit. Enter Y to delete this code.

Repeat step 4 for all other duplicates. The program will realize what you are doing and it will not ask as many questions.

Stratford Newsletter
 Copyright 1995 all rights reserved
Stratford Healthcare Systems, Inc.
 840 Mitten Road
 Burlingame, CA 94010
 Phone (650) 692-7970
 Fax (650) 692-1073
<http://www.stratfordsoftware.com>
mail@stratfordsoftware.com