*J*uly was one of our busiest months. Many people with obsolete software packages are being forced to change to a software package that has the electronic formats required by HCFA. We expect even more new business beginning in August as HCFA sends out rejection notices to those people who transmit in the old formats. As a temporary fix, it may be possible for them to transmit to a clearinghouse so the claims can be reformatted. Of course, the clearinghouse would charge for that service.•

You can find Stratford's Internet server at this address:

*I*n the past we have had customers ask us for a program that is specifically designed to capture clinical information. In response, we have supplied "hooks" to some third party programs. In the future we hope to design a program that works on a PDA (personal digital assistant). We will either have our own program or supply an interface to a third party program. There are several problems at this time. First, the hardware is still too expensive and cumbersome. Second, we have done surveys and have determined that there is a very small number of people who are willing to pay for a program like this. Now there may be a third reason why this type of program will be extremely difficult to deliver. The FDA may decide to regulate clinical programs. The *Federal Register* has a notice of a workshop to be held September 3-4 at the National Institutes of Health campus in Bethesda, Md. to obtain comments on the issue. Harvey Rudolph, acting director of the FDA's office of science and technology center for devices and radiological health believes that clinical software meets the definition of a medical device since clinical software can directly affect the well-being of a patient. If the software is regulated, the cost of complying with the regulations could be $500,000 annually. Unless a very large number of providers use the software, it would be difficult to pay for the development costs and the costs associated with regulation. One argument against regulation is that information systems do not impact the human body, they are only tools used by a clinician. A counterargument for regulation is that software is getting more sophisticated and providers may rely too much on answers supplied by the software. We will be following this closely as we have been planning to expand our program to include the ability to capture clinical information. The present free-text note fields could be supplemented with specific fields.•

FROM THE EDI CORNER......

We are receiving many calls from people who have software packages that cannot create the electronic format required by HCFA. Many of them have told us that they plan to begin sending paper claims because they do not want to change to new software. It is obvious that HCFA plans to require electronic transmission of all claims in the near future. We believe that it is better to get prepared now rather than wait. You can be sure that there will be thousands of providers who will wait. When electronic claims are finally required there will be a large number of people trying to change to a new software package at the same time. Even though we can usually get an office running on our software in a few weeks, there are usually more phone calls during the first 90 days. All other software companies have the same experience. You do not want to be in the group of people who wait. •

INTERNET NOTES

The Software Forum in Palo Alto California has an Internet Sig. The monthly meeting are held in an auditorium at Sun Microsystems. Last month's meeting featured the founders of Virtual Vineyards. Their Internet address is:

`http://www.virtualvn.com/`

As you might guess, they sell wine and food. They ship all over the world. Most shipments are to the San Francisco Bay Area and Japan. They have wines from small vineyards that may not have enough volume to be sold in retail stores. For more information read the article in the Software Forum newsletter by Marisa Williams. •

In the October 1995 newsletter we had an article entitled Certificate Authority. The US Postal Service is launching a pilot project this summer to test the electronic postmarking of documents sent over the Internet. Cylink Corp of Sunnyvale CA is providing the public-key encryption and certificate-issuing technology for the Postal Service. Any user will be able to send email or a document to the Postal Service's Web site. The USPS will then put an electronic time stamp on it and forward it to the addressee. The process will take less than one minute. Each postmark costs about 10 cents. This will give email the same legal protection that a postmark on a letter confers upon a piece of mail.

This technology can probably be used to replace paper communication by providers. A physician could send a prescription to a pharmacy or order lab and xray tests for a patient. Orders for hospitalized patients could be transmitted with guaranteed security. A return-receipt is available which would provide legal proof if necessary. •

ONLINE ENROLLMENT SERVICES FOR HEALTH COVERAGE

In the July 1995 newsletter we announced that Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts planned to provide enrollment services and general health-care information to its members and employees online. They have now demonstrated a prototype of the online services developed in conjunction with Healtheon. This is a Palo Alto, CA start-up company founded by Jim Clark, currently the CEO of Netscape Communications in Santa Clara, CA. The two companies have been working together since the beginning of 1996 and will begin offering services in the fall.

One of the services that will be available is online physician selection. The Internet user can describe the type of doctor he/she wants and a list of doctors that fit the description will be displayed on the screen.

Physicians will be able to activate an email option to communicate with patients if they wish.

Healtheon plans to use the Internet to verify insurance eligibility and ultimately exchange clinical data.

This is a long term project and may be the way that everyone manages their healthcare five years from now. •

JOB OPENINGS AT STRATFORD

Stratford will run your Stratford software related classified ad in our monthly newsletter *free*, upon SHS approval!

If you know someone who is (or was) employed by a Stratford competitor that is going out of business, Stratford has job openings now and we are anxious to talk to her/him.

If you believe you have the necessary qualifications for customer support and or healthcare software programming, please contact us.

Please send your resume by fax to; (415) 692-1073 or by email to: **jobs@stratfordsoftware.com**. Do not call. If you are qualified, we will contact you to set up an interview.

Software support and development is a career with an unlimited future. We believe it IS the future.•

SOFTWARE SUPPORT NOTES

We have customers who say "The update you sent caused us a lot of trouble. We should not be charged for the phone calls to solve the problems." Most of our updates go to hundreds of customers. We test our updates extensively on different types of hardware configurations. The Stratford software design is now in the 32nd revision. It is extremely stable. Although you may have problems, the problems could be due to many things. We cannot guarantee that our software will work perfectly the first time with all hardware configurations. Pointing fingers is divisive and will not create goodwill between you and Stratford. If you have a problem, we are here to try to help you solve it. Solving problems requires labor. Our charges are EXTREMELY cheap for someone to help you with a special problem or to get your electronic claims working. We only raise the charge $21.50 per month. Before you call us to complain about your bill, think about the amount involved and ask yourself how much service you can provide for $21.50. If you consider all the costs of using Stratford software, you will find that it is much less expensive than any other comparable software package.

As of July 16, 1996 more than 50% of our customers called 6 times (or less) and were charged the minimum support fee. This is for the period beginning 03/01/96 **(not per month!)** We track each client's support usage over a 120+ day "window" so that a problem in one month should not change the monthly rate. •
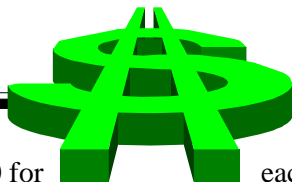
Stratford   will pay you $100 for   each person* you refer who purchases Stratford Software at full price ($895). Simply call or write to give us your referral. **We must receive the referral notice in advance of the sale**. We will take care of the rest!
*Subject to restrictions

Stratford
EDI software
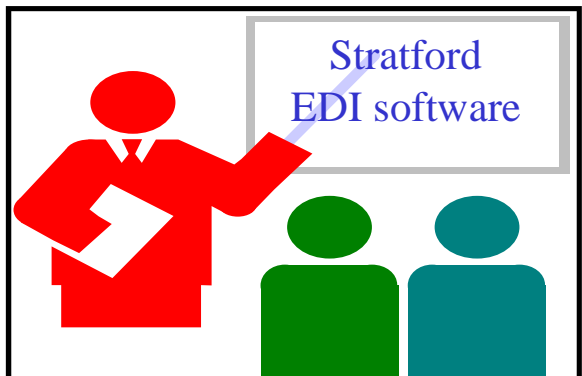
ADVANCED TIP OF THE MONTH

Priority support service: The fastest way to get support is by fax. It is possible for us to receive more than 100 calls within the first 15 minutes after we open in the morning. It is not possible for us to have a technical support person waiting to take your call without charging much more than we now do.

If you send a fax with a description of the problem, your call is given priority over other calls. If you call and leave the message "please call", your call is placed at the bottom of the call-back list. We must do everything we can to avoid "phone-tag" so that we may help the maximum number of people in the minimum amount of time.

Do not call more than one time. The