

STRATFORD

Volume 22.03

Healthcare EDI and Management Software

March 1998

The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 will make many changes in the delivery of healthcare in the United States in the coming years.

stratford notes

For example the act permits a physician or practitioner to enter into private contracts with Medicare beneficiaries to provide covered services, if specific requirements are met.

What is a private contract? This is a contract between a Medicare beneficiary and a physician or other practitioner who has "opted out" of Medicare for two years for all covered items and services he or she furnishes to Medicare beneficiaries. In a private contract, the Medicare beneficiary agrees to give up Medicare payment for services furnished by the physician or practitioner and to pay the physician or practitioner without regard to any limits that would otherwise apply to what the physician or practitioner could charge. Specifically, the beneficiary must agree not to bill Medicare or ask the physician or practitioner to bill Medicare. The beneficiary must acknowledge that Medigap will not pay towards the services and that other supplemental insurers may not pay either. The contract is not valid if the beneficiary is facing an emergency or urgent health situation.

Another provision requires that almost all providers must supply diagnosis codes. We have more on this inside this newsletter.

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Stratford has more than 3,400 licensed users

The CLIA number must be included on all claims for laboratory services, including purchased tests. This information applies to both clinical diagnostic laboratory services and surgical anatomical pathology services.

Ambulance billers must supply an ICD-9 diagnosis code that supports Medical Necessity. There is a list of the codes in your Medicare bulletin.

A very important change regarding clinical consultations is that the consultation must meet several criteria before it can be paid. One criterion is that the clinical consultation must be requested by the patient's attending physician. Standing orders are no longer acceptable.

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Training Classes **SHS Software Basic Training**

In the Stratford Classroom:

Every Friday 9:30 AM -12:00 PM \$165

1:30 PM - 4:00 PM \$165

By Appointment \$165

Call for class availability at least three days in advance.

On-site training with a certified Stratford trainer may be available (*by appointment only*). The cost is \$250.

Telephone training is also available (*by appointment*)

FROM THE EDI CORNER.....

Payments for electronic claims to Medicare will be extended up to seven days. This means that you may need to wait up to 20 days versus the present 14 days. Paper claim payments will be extended to 30 days. •

FAX CLAIM SUBMISSION DISCONTINUED

We have received notice from several payers recently announcing that they will no longer process faxed claims. If you have been printing and then faxing your claims, now is the time to get that modem working and begin to transmit your claims. If you need help, please fax to (650) 692 1073 and let us help you. •

FLOPPY DISKETTE SUBMISSION

We have received notice from CIGNA that diskette submission of claims will no longer be counted or paid as electronic claims beginning October 1, 1998. All claims received by diskette on October 1, 1998 and after will be counted as paper claims and will be held to a minimum 26-day payment floor.

This is one more reason for you to begin transmitting your claims by modem. If you need help, please fax to us at (650) 692 1073. •

DIAGNOSIS CODES REQUIRED FROM NON-PHYSICIAN PRACTITIONERS

The Balanced Budget Act (BBA) revises the Medicare laws so that diagnosis codes are now required from all non-physician practitioners for all services billed after January 1, 1998. For purposes of this provision, non-physician practitioners include physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified registered nurse anesthetists, certified nurse midwives, clinical psychologists and clinical social workers.

Beginning April 1, 1998 all claims without diagnostic claims will be returned as unprocessable.

This requirement extends to physicians who order certain items or services furnished by another entity. This includes diagnostic x-ray tests, laboratory and other diagnostic tests. It also includes durable medical equipment (DME) and prosthetic devices.

If you are a private practitioner and you order an x-ray for your patient, you must provide a diagnosis code on the x-ray order. •

EDI "per-claim" charges

Stratford does not have any "per-claim" or other charges related to transmitting claims to Medicare or any other carrier. We only charge (optional) for supporting you while you are using the Stratford

HIGH-CAPACITY HARD DISKS

Storage Dimensions is shipping 3.5" 18.2GB UltraSCSI 7200 RPM disk drives in the company's SuperFlex™ 3000 DGR™ Ultra and SuperFlex 5000 RAID storage systems. The new high-capacity drives double the storage capacity in a seven-drive SuperFlex system to 127.4GB. Multiple SuperFlex configurations can now scale to capacities up to 4TB by supporting more than 1TB of capacity on each server SCSI channel. Features include Self-Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Technology (SMART), a new industry standard that monitors various parameters and can predict drive mechanism failures.

Also, Seagate has announced a new type of disk drive storage technology that uses lasers. This should increase the storage capacity more than 20 times.

These increases in storage and the decreases in price will make clinical software more attractive to healthcare providers. Sometime in the next 10 years, we may see an end to the paper "patient chart". •

NEW POSTAL REGULATIONS

The USPS has changed its requirements for endorsements that mailers are to use to request an addressee's new address and to provide instructions on how to handle undeliverable-as-addressed mail. The major changes to these procedures have to do with the placement of and words used for these endorsements. In the past there

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



were 12 possible endorsements. Endorsements will now consist of one of four key words: "Address", "Forwarding", "Return" or "Change". You should use one of these keywords followed with "Service Requested". The Stratford 2-window envelopes are being changed to read "Address Service Requested". •

BLUECARD PROCESSES CLAIMS FOR ALL BLUE PLANS

The BlueCard is an agreement between all Blue plans to make their networks available for employees traveling out of state and National Accounts. You may be able to send any Blue Cross Blue Shield claim to any Blue Cross Blue Shield member plan.

There may be special requirements for sending claims so be sure you check first. For example, if you send claims to Blue Cross of California the subscriber ID is a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 12 positions. This means that if the subscriber ID is longer than 12 characters, you cannot send the claim to Blue Cross of California. •

SOFTWARE SUPPORT NOTES

- 1 **Faxed requests for support get Priority Service.**
- 2 **If you send a fax with a description of the problem, your call is given priority over other faxes.**
- 3 **Do not call more than one time. The second call places your first call at the bottom of our callback list.**

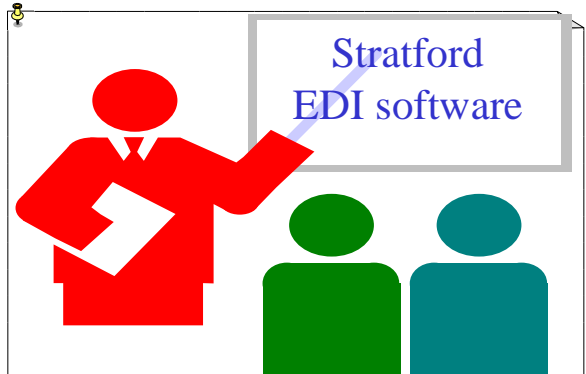
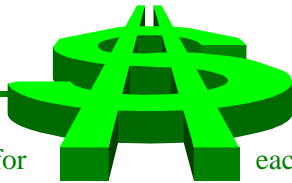
We can receive many calls in the first few hours each day. It usually is not possible for us to have a technical support person waiting to take your call. If you just call and leave the message "please call", your call is placed at the bottom of the callback list. We must do everything we can to avoid "phone-tag". Hand-written faxes can be almost impossible to read, so please type them whenever possible.

At this time we can deliver support by email. If you check your email each day, you may find this to be easier than faxing us. This is not very good support if you need a quick answer. We do not get very many support email messages so we only check the mail two or three times each day. As the volume increases, we will put more resources into email.

We are interested in hearing from people who would like to receive support by email. •

Stratford you \$100 for you refer who Stratford Software at full price (\$895). Simply fax or write to give us your referral. **We must receive the referral notice in advance of the sale. We cannot pay for a referral if you notify us after the sale.**

*Subject to restrictions



INTERNET RESOURCES

Here is our latest recommendation for web sites to visit.

In the August 1997 newsletter we had an article regarding HEDIS. This is one of many articles that are planned on this subject. In that article we mentioned HEDIS version 3. Here is a web site that has more information about version 3:

www.ncqa.org/hedis/30exsum.htm

Possibly next month we will have another article. The reason this is important for Stratford and you is that the program will probably need many changes so that more data can be collected. We are designing much of the new "outcome" criteria into our new product, which is due to be released this year. •

Stratford Newsletter

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