*stratford notes*

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

W e are just about to wrap up our best year ever. We have expanded our customer base into the Northeastern United States significantly. We have added more payers to our list of EDI partners this year than any other year in the 22-year+ history of the company.

The Stratford "Windows only" program is coming along nicely but it won't be ready for testing this year as we had hoped. As we stated in previous newsletters, we are going to compile the program using Microsoft's new Visual Studio version 6.0. We received our final copy in August and the first service pack in October. We received more upgrades to some Internet tools that we are incorporating into the product in October. We are expecting 2 more upgrades to our framework in late November or December. After these have been fully tested, we will begin assembling all the parts that have been constructed over the past three years. This has been our most ambitious project to date. The ideas and code from 7 different groups of programmers all over the United States have influenced us. All of the work with outside programmers has been done using Internet resources.

We believe that all electronic claims will be transmitted over the Internet at some point in the future. This is a logical way to have a clearinghouse or other payer accept claims from any provider in the United States with no long distance charges. The only missing link at this time is an acceptable security mechanism. We believe that HCFA will select one or more security methods before the year 2001.

If you want more information about HCFA's policy regarding the use of the Internet for data transmission, you can find it at this Internet address:

`http://www.jhita.org`

This is the web site for the Joint Healthcare Information Technology Alliance (JHITA). This organization issued a report dated September 15, 1998 that discusses various approaches that may be acceptable. You may also refer to a HCFA document titled *Bulletin Number 98-01* or *HCFA - Information Systems Security Program (ISSP) Handbook*.

We plan to have our program fully integrated with the Internet before the end of 1999. •

Stratford has nearly 3,700 licensed users

## FROM THE EDI CORNER ......

Arkansas BlueCross BlueShield has been awarded the Medicare contract for the state of Missouri. Arkansas BlueCross BlueShield also has Medicare contracts for Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Louisiana. The office in Little Rock, Arkansas will handle all EDI functions currently in Missouri. •

The conversion of all electronic claims to the ANSI X-12 formats will be delayed until after the Year 2000 projects. •

Florida Medicare has discontinued the use of one of their Automated Claim Submission host facilities as of October 1, 1998. The phone numbers will eventually be changed. •

Transamerica Medicare (Southern California) has started a policy that is designed to keep the error rate of electronic claims below 5%. If a submitter such as a billing service or group of providers exceeds 5%, no additional provider will be added to the submitter number until the error rate is below 5% for more than 30 days. It is very easy to keep your error rate below 5%; just use Stratford software. We are not aware of any Stratford customer that has ever had an error rate of 5%.

Also, Transamerica will begin rejecting claims that do not have 8 digit dates after December 31, 1998. Currently they are converting 6 digit dates to 8 digit dates. •

## A REMINDER FROM THE STRATFORD SUPPORT TEAM

If you hand-write your fax and it is unreadable, we usually must show it to several people to try to decipher it. This delays a response to your support request. We always appreciate those customers who type or print the information legibly. This helps us help you. •

## NO MORE TOLL FREE PHONE LINES TO MEDICARE

Beginning January 1, 1999, you will not be able to transmit your claims if you are using a toll free line. Toll free lines were offered to "PAR" providers many years ago. Your Medicare carrier will probably contact you directly if you are required to change the phone number that you call. If you are certain that you must change your number and Medicare has not contacted you on or before December 1, 1998, you need to contact them. You may also fax a request to Stratford and we will help you determine what number you are now calling. •

### 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 providing software support.

## GOOD NEWS FOR SPAM HATERS

If you are now using the Internet for a lot of your communication, you have probably been exposed to Spam. Here at Stratford we receive 250-600 email messages per day. Often as many as 50 of those messages are Spam. Spam also is known as UCE or Unsolicited Commercial Email.

For more than one year you have been able to forward any Spam you receive to uce@ftc.gov and that is where all the Spam that we receive is sent.

Now the State of California has a new law that makes Spam illegal. The Spammer can receive a fine of $500 per message and six months in jail. An ISP (internet service provider, like AOL) can sue for $50 per message up to $25,000 per day or actual damages whichever amount is greater.

Probably the best news for parents is that all Spam must have "ADV:" in the subject line of messages. Adult-oriented Spam meant for people over 18 must have "ADV:ADLT" in the subject line.

If you use Microsoft Outlook Express or similar program for your email, there is an "inbox assistant" on the "Tools" menu. Using the inbox assistant you can set up a rule that will automatically delete any email that has "ADV:" in the subject line. You can move the message to the "deleted" folder. You can also just have the message deleted from the email server so you will never even see the message.

Another option is to leave the message on the email server. Your ISP may want you to leave the message so they can use it to prosecute the spammer.

The California law only benefits residents of California. There are also laws aimed at spammers in Nevada and Washington.

If you forward your Spam to the Federal Trade Commission at uce@ftc.gov, it will notify them of Spam. They have begun prosecuting spammers. Recently more than 40 companies were indicted.

If you don't use email, you may not think this is much of a problem. For those of us who use email in our business it is becoming a serious problem. In the future, we here at Stratford believe that email will begin to replace fax as the primary means of software support. At this time we have several dealers who download updates from our web site. We have at least 2 dealers who have never received anything at all from Stratford by USPS or UPS or any other carrier.

We believe that the HCFA will require all Medicare claims to be sent via the Internet

## SOFTWARE SUPPORT NOTES

**1    Faxed requests for support get <u>Priority</u> <u>Service</u>.**

**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. Include the best time to call you.

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. •
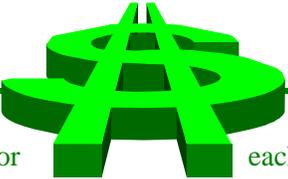
Stratford                                        will pay
you $100 for                              each person*
you refer who                              purchases
Stratford Software at full price ($895).  Simply fax or write to give us your referral. **We must receive the referral notice in advance of the sale**. **We cannot pay for a referral if you notify us after the sale.**
*<u>Subject to restrictions</u>

## Stratford EDI software

## INTERNET RESOURCES

Subject: Healthcare resource material.

There is a site named: Cut to the Chase Inc. located at::

`http://www.cuttothechase.com`

This site has resource material and articles about accreditation, human resources, information technology, and may other healthcare management topics.

The have information about healthcare career development including advice about job interviews.

They have links to other sites.

You must register, but it is free. •

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