STRATFORD

stratford notes

User meeting in Las Vegas. We have had many requests from our users for a meeting where they can get to know the Stratford support team and ask questions. Las Vegas has low cost room rates and frequent airline access from all over the US. Since Stratford is the software you use to collect your hard-earned fees, the meeting is probably tax-deductible. Of course, you have to ask your tax professional about that. The meeting will be structured but informal. There will be a meeting with lots of free time so you can enjoy the Las Vegas scene. Since this is the first meeting open to all users and prospective users, we are asking for your input as to dates and interest in attending. Please let us know by email: lasvegas@stratfordsoftware.com Since last month's newsletter, we have made a few changes thanks to input from our users. The meeting will one day, probably on Saturday. Possible dates are Mar 8 or 22, Apr 5 or 19, May 3 or 17 or 31, June 14 or 28, July 12 or 26. Please let us know if you prefer a different time and what you would like to have discussed at the meeting. For example, we have made extensive changes to the scheduler in the Windows –only version. This will be demonstrated. We have had requests for a wireless synchronization with a 'palm' type hand-held scheduler. If you are interested in giving a session and/or answering user questions, let us know — especially if you have been a trainer. you may get some of your expenses paid, etc. There may be some prizes for licensed users. This is a user's meeting and we will not be selling anything at the meeting. •

You can find Stratford's Internet server at this address:
`http://www.stratfordsoftware.com/`

inside this issue . . . .

Stratford has almost **4,900** licensed users

Stratford's software is now officially HIPAA compliant. If you transmit Medicare claims to NHIC, Stratford is now approved for transmitting v4010 for both California and New England. If you subscribe to our software support on a continuing basis, you will receive an update automatically that will convert you to the compliant version in about one minute, depending on the speed of your hardware. •

Last month we mentioned about how **you can auto-pay your bill by having a credit card on file**. If you pay for a full year in advance, you receive the 11th & 12th months at no charge. You will continue to get a fully itemized monthly statement and newsletter. •

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Pre-paid support customers may use email for the fastest response:

support@stratfordsoftware.com

FROM THE EDI CORNER ......

Stratford is fully compliant with the new HIPAA federal law as it applies to software vendors like us. We are ready to test our ANSI X.12 version 4010 format with any payer. •

We are presently testing for HIPAA with NHIC — Southern California Noridian (Medicare contractor for several states), Trail Blazer, Riverbend, Florida Medicare, Administar Indiana, Railroad Medicare and various East Coast payers such as Mass Health Tufts and BCBSMA.

ProxyMed (a clearinghouse that we recommend) will be able to accept UB-92 claims as well as dental claims in the future.

We are working with ProxyMed to enable Stratford users to send claims using FTP over their Internet connection. •

We have successfully semi-automated the Internet claims transmission to EDS Medi-Cal/Medicaid. •

MORE NOTES

CD Updates are now being shipped to our clients at least once per quarter. Our new system of insuring that each customer gets an update at least once per 90 days should help eliminate most payer claim rejections. This service is only available if you subscribe to software support continuously and accept updates on CD. •

A new manual format is available. If you have wanted a manual that would lay flat on the table and have pages that could be removed, you can now have it. We have a new vendor that is supplying the manual in a small 3-ring binder format. It looks like the old manual in size and design but is much more convenient to use. The price is $25 (+ tax & shipping). •

Shipping charges have increased. If you can accept your software updates on CD, we will send it by US mail and the charges are very reasonable. Of course paper shipment charges will increase. Our prices are still much lower than office products stores even with increased shipping. •

Blue Shield of California may pay for 'online consults' or 'web calls' from patients. BSCA may pay $20 per call. Other payers looking at this option include ConnectiCare, Pacificare Health Systems, Inc. Cigna, Health Net Inc, and First Health Group. •

Your clearinghouse may have setup fees and/or charge you for EDI claims, but Stratford does not. •

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.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT STRATFORD SOFTWARE

Q: I just came back from a seminar on HIPAA. I am wondering about my relationship with Stratford since you provide me with software. I, of course, use your software to do my billing. That billing information contains a patients diagnosis code as well as my procedure code. Technically that seems like it would be 'protected patient information' under the HIPAA definition. Do I need a special 'Business Associate' contract with Stratford? Also, I use the 'Notes' area of the Stratford program to record office notes, which I am pretty sure would be 'confidential/ protected' information in many cases. At least, I certainly would not want that information released without a court order.

A: Our answer is "No, we do not think so", but we are not qualified to give you legal advice. In December 2002 there is 'OCR Guidance' that, we believe, is on this specific point. Here is an excerpt (again, we cannot give you legal advice, so you are on your own for interpretation): "The mere selling or providing of software to a covered entity does not give rise to a business associate relationship if the vendor does not have access to the protected health information of the covered entity. If the vendor does need access to the protected health information of the covered entity in order to provide its service, the vendor would be a business associate of the covered entity. For example, a software company that hosts the software containing patient information on its own server or accesses patient information when troubleshooting the software function, is a business associate of a covered entity. In

these examples, a covered entity would be required to enter into a business associate agreement before allowing the software company access to protected health information. However, when an employee of a contractor, like a software or information technology vendor, has his or her primary duty station on-site at a covered entity, the covered entity may choose to treat the employee of the vendor as a member of the covered entity's workforce, rather than as a business associate. See the definition of "workforce" at 45 CFR 160.103."

Stratford cannot access its client's patient information. On our web site, we have posted a sample BA agreement that could be used if we ever did get access.

Q: So, now it looks like you may support Linux in the future?

A: Yes, it is possible. Here is a recent development that convinces us that Linux is a significant improvement in operating systems. As most people who use Windows realize, it is very unstable. Newer versions add features without fixing problems. For example, we find WinXP to be much less stable than Win2000 or Win98. We continue to use Win98 for most of our day-to-day activities because we find it to be more compatible with most software.
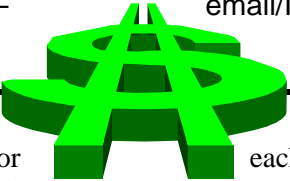
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SOFTWARE SUPPORT NOTES

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

2 **If you send an Email or fax with a description of the problem, your call is given priority over other Emails and faxes**.

3 **Do not call more than one time. The second call places your first call at the bottom of our callback list.**
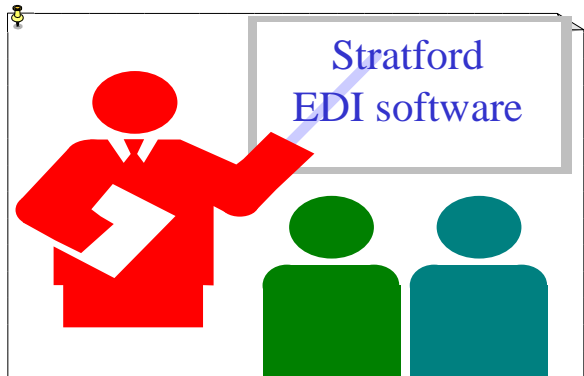
We can receive many support requests in the first few hours each day. It usually is not possible for us to have a technical support person waiting to take your call. If you just call and leave the message "please call", your call is placed at the bottom of the callback list. We must do everything we 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 best by email. If you check your email each day, you may find this to be easier than faxing us. We check our email constantly — at least every 5 minutes. We are putting most of our resources into email and other methods that utilize the Internet. If you have an ICQ number, we can support it. Let us know.

We are interested in hearing from people who would like to receive support by Internet —   email/ICQ, etc.
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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

Here is the source (12/03/2002) for the BA comments on page 3: (See the last Q & A in the document titled 'Business Associates" for the excerpt on page 3 of this newsletter.)

http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/privacy.html

This is a source of encryption information related to HIPAA:

http://www.21cfrpart11.com/pages/library/index.htm

Medicare & You 2003. This is a handbook from Medicare about your (patient's) rights:

http://www.medicare.gov/publications/pubs/pdf/10050.pdf

Here is a good FAQ for people with Medicare coverage:

http://medicare.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/medicare.cfg/php/enduser/std_alp.php