Where you need to go for Medicare claims data release assistance

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As reporting about the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) recent release of physician Medicare claims data continues to cycle through the media, a new resource page from the AMA offers the essential information you need to know about the data release.

The physician Medicare claims data, which was made available April 9, includes such information as billed charges, Medicare payments and the number of different Medicare services provided in 2012. Because CMS released only raw data with little context and considerable limitations, it’s easy for patients, reporters and others to draw inaccurate conclusions about individual physicians. The AMA’s new resource page can provide the clarification you need.

The page offers the latest information about what’s included in the data, explains the limitations of the data set, and provides a handout and talking points for physicians who may need to respond to patient or media inquiries about their information.

If you haven’t already downloaded your data, CMS now offers an online search tool that simplifies the look-up process for patients and physicians. The agency also provides a searchable online database for those who wish to look more closely at the data set.

The AMA resource page also includes the email address to which you can submit complaints or questions about your data to CMS. While the agency has denied requests to establish a process for physicians to correct inaccuracies in their data, the AMA continues to press CMS to provide a mechanism for remedying errors. The AMA also is urging CMS to post an expanded list of limitations with the data, requiring users to click through the list prior to accessing the information.

A new patient handout includes some of the primary limitations of the data and provides much-needed context. You also can download a version of the handout that lets you customize the content to focus on the information most relevant to your unique practice.


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