

ATRA Law Includes Physician Update Fix For 2013



On Wednesday, January 2, 2013, President Obama signed into law the **American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012**. This new law prevents a scheduled payment cut for physicians and other practitioners who treat Medicare patients from taking effect on January 1, 2013. The new law provides for a zero percent update for such services through **December 31, 2013**. This provision guarantees seniors have continued access to their doctors by fixing the **Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR)** through the end of 2013. President Obama remains committed to a permanent solution to eliminating the SGR reductions that result from the exiting statutory methodology. The Administration will continue to work with Congress to achieve this goal.

Under **Section 601** of the law, and in order to allow sufficient time to develop, test and implement the revised **MPFS**, Medicare claims administration contractors may hold **MPFS** claims with January 2013 dates of service for up to 10 business days (through January 15, 2013). **CMS** expects these claims to be released into processing no later than January 16, 2013. The claim hold should have minimal impact on physician/practitioner cash flow because, under current law, clean electronic claims are not paid sooner than **14 calendar days** (29 for paper claims) after the date of receipt. Claims with dates of service **prior to January 1, 2013** are unaffected. Medicare claims administration contractors will be posting the **MPFS** payment rates on their websites no later than **January 23, 2013**.

EHR Statistics That May Surprise You

- 9.245B represents the amount of **EHR Incentive** payments made through November of 2012
- 72% is the number of office based doctors using **EHR** in 2012
- 320,000 is the number of eligible providers that have registered for **EHR**
- 52,000 is how many more family physicians are needed by 2025 to accommodate the anticipated growth in primary care office visits
- 48% represents the number of **physicians** e-prescribing in 2012
- just 7% of physicians were **e-prescribing** in 2008now **THAT** is meaningful use!

One *small* Word Can Make a **BIG** Difference in Patient Collections

Did you know that implementing one **small** change at your front desk can make a **big** difference in your patient collections?

Oftentimes, front desk personnel at physicians' offices who are checking out patients ask "**Do you WANT to make a payment today?**". In effect, the wording they are using allows the patient to think that they have an **OPTION** whether or not they **WANT** to make a payment. Training your staff to ask "**HOW would you like to pay your bill today?**" will help **increase** collections at your front desk because it sends a message to the patient that you **EXPECT** payment when they receive services.

Besides having a written financial policy that the

patient signs, this one small change can be the most important factor in increasing your patient collections. Training your front desk staff to utilize this phrase is all it takes, although a reminder, like a small sign with the word "**HOW?**" strategically located in their view can be a great reminder.

Over time, your patients will appreciate knowing that the **expectation** is there for them to make their copay at the time of their visit, and they will become more proactive about learning what their copay amount is and what their insurance will cover. A **small effort** on everyone's part will produce a more satisfying patient-office relationship as well as a better "**bottom line**" for the practice.