

Hawthorn Connection

Addressing Complexity with Certainty

Hawthorn Physician Services

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Proposed Rule Changes for MPFS in 2020

Medicare Conversion Factor will Increase Slightly

At the end of July 2019, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released its proposed 2020 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) Proposed Rule. As is customary, CMS will accept comments on the proposed rule until September 27, 2019, and the MPFS Final Rule will go into effect after the first of the year, on or after January 1, 2020.

The American Medical Association (AMA) serves as a focal point for submitting comments on the proposed rule to CMS. An AMA committee, known as RUC, represents all medical specialties by surveying physicians and providing recommendations to CMS concerning the fee schedule and the formulas for calculating relative value units (RVUs). Additionally, various other associations, societies and colleges—representing the total range of medical specialties—will prepare and forward comments to CMS.

Proposed Conversion Factor

CMS is proposing a slight increase in the conversion factor for calculating fee schedule payments. The proposed 2020 conversion factor is \$36.09 (rounded), up from \$36.04 (rounded) in 2019.

Changes to E/M Visit Payments

For 2020, CMS is proposing a return to the 5-tier coding system for evaluation and management (E/M) visits with established payments, and a 4-tier coding system for new patients. These E/M codes are used to bill payments for routine patient visits. Significantly, these proposed changes would revise the time guidelines and decision-

making criteria for coding E/M visits, and would not require a medical exam or medical history except when clinically pertinent.

As noted on the CMS website (www.cms.gov) the proposed rule would “align the E/M coding and payment with changes recommended by the CPT Editorial Panel and AMA RUC for office/outpatient E/M visits.” CMS states that the proposed rule was part of a strategy to “create a healthcare system that results in better accessibility, quality, affordability, empowerment and innovation.”

Hawthorn is Trained and Ready

Shelly Bangert, Hawthorn’s director of revenue cycle management, commented on the proposed rule and the implications for Hawthorn and its clients. “We follow the proposed changes closely,” Bangert said. “We monitor the provisions of the proposed rule, and we follow the comments submitted to CMS. When the changes go into effect, we are trained and ready act in behalf of our physicians, coding all procedures quickly and accurately, and billing the charges immediately.”

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