



# Physicians

**PHAX**  
September 2004

## Medical Billing For Patient Discussions About Hospice

This HospiceCare Educational Resource is a follow up to last month's discussion on "Broaching the topic of Palliative Consults". In response to last month's Physician Phax, Dr. David Hibbard, a family physician in private practice offered these tips on medical billing for patient discussions about hospice.

"You can legally bill Medicare 99213 for your 15 minute conversation with Medicare patients about the Medicare Hospice Benefit – and you will be reimbursed!

On March, 28, 2003, The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, sent a memo which states Physicians and health care providers in the community, Skilled Nursing Facilities and hospitals are URGED TO RAISE AWARENESS among their patients about the hospice benefit and its availability.

Ever since then I have asked each of my Medicare patients (at a time when I am seeing them for a medical problem) to schedule an appointment so I can, at the request of the Federal Government, educate them about the Medicare Hospice Benefit. I explain that Medicare, which funds the Hospice benefit, wants you to be aware of the details, NOW, while you are still healthy, a much better time to do this, I tell my patients, than when you are in the dying process. I tell them, bring a spouse, if possible, and or a near relative.

When they come back, I give them each a single sheet which lists all the Hospice benefits, like a Hospice nurse who will make a house call at 3 a.m. in the morning if they are in pain and don't know if they need to go to the ER or not.

I explain that they would be cared for in their home (or the HospiceCare Center if they get too sick to be taken care of at home), the entire program, including meds related to their hospice diagnosis, cost them absolutely nothing. It is covered 100% by Medicare.

I dictate a note for the chart stating that this patient came in, at the request of Medicare, to discuss the Hospice benefit and that I discussed all the benefits. For my assessment I list the diagnosis that is most likely to be their cause of death, e.g. complications from diabetes, heart, lung or kidney disease, dementia or aging.

I state in my dictation that I spent 15 minutes with the patient, all of which was educational. I charge a 99213 for a 15-minute discussion and a 99214 for a 25-minute one, and I list as the diagnosis the probable cause of death. Patients and families love these talks. So do I! They de-mystify the aging and dying process."

**HospiceCare of Boulder and Broomfield Counties have physicians with a board specialty certification in hospice and palliative medicine that are available for palliative medicine consults, also. If you think a consult would be useful, please call us.**

*Note: David Hibbard, M.D., can be reached at 1000 W. South Boulder Road, Suite 110, Lafayette, CO 80026. His office number is (303) 604-5049.*

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