



Oncology Issues

**Clinical Trials:
The Road Ahead**
What's in the pipeline?
**Healthcare
Systems**
A Model Patient Management System
**The Need for More Research on
Clinical Trial Eligibility**
Preparing for 4IR
Radiation Oncology Coding

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In the News

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HCFA ANNOUNCES PHONE-IN MEDICARE CLAIM APPEAL SERVICE

Beginning February 1, 2000, you will be able to appeal your Medicare claims over the phone as well as in writing. The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) announced this new policy in the *Federal Register* of September 30, 1999 (p.52665). This policy applies only to initial claims denial. To move to the second level appeal, you will have to ask for a carrier fair hearing. HCFA states in the rule that many carriers will give a decision on the phone. Others will call back with a decision. HCFA expects the turnaround time on these reviews to be one or two business days. Carriers have 45 days to respond to written appeals. Initial appeals must be made within six months of the original denial, whether that appeal is made by phone or on paper.

Most likely, the phone-in service will help for simple or straightforward issues. More complex appeals, such as those for new indications of drugs or treatments (medical necessity) requiring extensive clinical documentation, will probably be more effective when filed on paper.

Additionally, the Office of the Inspector General has recommended that HCFA be more aggressive in its response to claims appeals in the administrative law judicial process. Currently, even in cases involving significant policy or substantial amounts of money, HCFA's case is often presented only on paper. The recommendations come in part as a result of the stunning increase (99 percent) in Part B administrative law judicial appeals and reversal rates (81 percent) last year.

PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY GROUPS MERGE

Children's Oncology Group is the official name of the newly formed national organization created by the merger of four pediatric cancer research groups. They are: the Children's Cancer Group (CCG), the Intergroup Rhabdomyosarcoma Study Group (IRSG), the National Wilms' Tumor Study Group (NWTSG), and the Pediatric Oncology Group (POG).

By merging, their combined resources will streamline intergroup study operations, produce faster research results, and speed the discovery of cures for childhood cancers.

"We seized the opportunity to create our own unified structure in response to the National Cancer Institute mandates for clinical trials reform," said William Crist, M.D., IRSG chair.

The new mission statement, institutional and individual membership criteria, and most of the governance decisions have been finalized. The goal was to establish inclusive membership criteria to ensure that all children

with cancer will have access to the best treatments provided by the pediatric clinical trials conducted at the Children's Oncology Group institutions. The Children's Oncology Group is expected to ratify the new constitution in early 2000 and elect its chair in 2001.

"Our unification efforts have received continued support and invaluable input from the NCI, the pharmaceutical industry, and patient advocates," said Archie Bleyer, M.D., CCG chair. "We plan to function as a single group by 2001, and apply for the first grant for the Children's Oncology Group in 2002."

For further inquiries, contact: POG Chair, Sharon Murphy, M.D. at 312-482-9944; CCG Chair, Archie Bleyer, M.D., 713-792-6194; IRSG Chair, William Crist, M.D., 507-266-4598; or NWTSG Chair, Daniel Green, M.D., 716-845-2334.

PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Meet You In Montana

Benefis Healthcare is currently accepting applications for **Administrative Director of the Oncology Center**. To be considered applicants must have the following: Master's or Ph.D. in a health care-related or business field or commensurate experience required. Two to five-years experience in a program management position (oncology-related highly preferred), or business development (preferably in a health care facility) or its equivalent. Highly developed interpersonal and communication skills (written and verbal) required to ensure success in negotiating and obtaining support from physicians, nursing staff, administration, and associates. Strong leadership skills including staff development; planning, organizing, implementing, evaluation, and maintenance of programs and projects; and ability to organize, manage and assume the risks of operating a business.

Benefis Healthcare, Montana's largest medical facility, is a regional referral center providing a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services. Benefis Healthcare's 2,000 plus employees provide comprehensive services at five locations in Great Falls, including the state's largest hospital facility, and outreach services in the region's 42,000 square miles, servicing 200,000 Northcentral Montana residents. More information on our facility and the Great Falls area can be obtained at our web site, www.benefis.org.

We offer a quality work environment and excellent salary/benefit packages. E.O.E. Apply at:

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