

Technology & Information

Personal Health Records Now on the Internet

A personal health record (PHR) keeps the medical information of Medicare beneficiaries at their fingertips without the hassle of shuffling through papers. PHRs are a safe and confidential way to store and track one's health history and other important medical information in one place. A PHR can help doctors by providing a complete picture of a patient's health and the information they need to give the best care and avoid duplicate tests and medical errors.

A variety of PHRs are available on the Internet. Medicare provides information about PHRs, some things to consider when looking for a PHR, and links to special PHR projects sponsored by Medicare. Visit the PHR page of the Medicare Web site at <http://www.medicare.gov/phr/PHRChoice.asp> to learn more for your beneficiaries.

Local Medicare Contractors Offer Valuable Information

Did you know that your local Medicare contractor (carrier, fiscal intermediary, or Medicare Administrative Contractor [MAC]) is a valuable source of news and information regarding Medicare business in your specific practice location? Through their electronic mailing lists, your local contractor can quickly provide you with information pertinent to your geographic area, such as local coverage determinations, local provider education activities, etc. If you have not done so already, you should go to your local contractor Web site and sign up for their listserv or e-mailing list. Many contractors have links on their home page to take you to their registration page to subscribe to their listserv. If you do not see a link on the homepage, just search their site for "listserv" or "e-mail list" to find the registration page. If

you do not know the Web address of your contractor's homepage, it is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/CallCenterTollNumDirectory.zip> on the CMS Web site.

Medicare & You 2009

CMS has provided an online resource for Medicare patients at <http://www.medicare.gov/Library/PDFNavigation/PDFInterim.asp?Language=English&Type=Pub&PubID=10050>. The resource offers a summary of Medicare benefits, rights and protections, and answers to the most frequently asked questions about Medicare. Let your patients know about this valuable reference document.

National Coordinator for HIT

The Department of Health and Human Services selected David Blumenthal, MD, MPP, as the Obama Administration's choice for National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. As the National Coordinator, Dr. Blumenthal will lead the implementation of a nationwide interoperable, privacy-protected health information technology (HIT) infrastructure as called for in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Dr. Blumenthal most recently served as a physician and director of the Institute for Health Policy at The Massachusetts General Hospital/Partners HealthCare System in Boston, Mass. He was also Samuel O. Thier Professor of Medicine and Professor of Health Care Policy at Harvard Medical School. There, he also served as director of the Harvard University Interfaculty Program for Health Systems Improvement. Prior to that, he was senior vice president at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital and served as executive director of the Center for Health Policy and Management and as a lecturer on Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Dr. Blumenthal will lead the effort at HHS to modernize the health care system by catalyzing the adoption of interoperable HIT by 2014, thereby reducing health costs for the federal government by an estimated \$12 billion over 10 years. *MPM*