Fee for Medical Records Copying*

While physicians have not traditionally sought to make a profit on providing medical records, they have sought to recover their costs particularly when a medical record is substantial (e.g., life-long patient, long-term medical condition, etc.). On February 18, 1998, Governor Ridge signed into law Act 26 of 1998, which sets the guidelines for the copying of medical records.

When a subpoena duces tecum is served upon a physician’s office requesting copies of medical records, the physician’s office must contact the attorney named on the subpoena within three days after receiving the subpoena. As a general proposition, a subpoena in a personal injury action brought by the patient does not require an authorization from the patient. However, any other request for medical records does require the authorization of the patient. Remember, specially protected records (i.e., drug and alcohol treatment, psychiatric treatment, and HIV information) require special authorization from the patient or a court order which specifically states which records are to be released.

A patient may request a copy of the patient’s record, without a subpoena, for his or her own use. It is important to note that the medical records for a patient is defined by state regulation as all “clinical information pertaining to the patient which has been accumulated by the physician, either by himself or through his agents.” This includes diagnostic test results, x-rays, physician notes, and any records from prior treating or consulting physicians.

With a few exceptions, the maximum fees for a record request from a patient or attorney are as follows:

- searching and retrieving the record - $15 maximum
- pages one through 20 - $1 per page
- pages 21 through 60 - $.75 per page
- pages 61 and after - $.25 per page
- copies from microfilm - $1.50
- actual mailing or delivery fees

If a district attorney requests a medical record for an action or proceeding, only the search and retrieval fee and actual mailing expenses may be charged. No independent or executive agency of the Commonwealth is required to pay any costs associated to medical charts or records unless required by law. At this time, Workers’ Compensation, Auto, and Medicare pay $.07 per page. In the instance of Medicaid, the record must be forwarded without charge to the Department of Welfare. If the medical record is requested for the purpose of supporting a claim or appeal under the Social Security Act, a flat fee of $19 plus postage may be charged. Insurers requesting medical records to validate reimbursement for medical services are not required to pay for copies of records unless their contract with the provider provides for such payment.

*Information provided by Lehigh County Medical Society
Outpatient Access to LMIC

The outpatient entrance to Lehigh Magnetic Imaging Center (LMIC) is located at the front of the 1220 building which faces the East Wing construction site. All outpatients coming to LMIC from any location on the hospital's campus must use this entrance since hallway access from the 1210, 1230, and 1240 buildings no longer exist due to construction. Convenient patient parking is available on the south side of LMIC between the 1230 building and the construction site.

The temporary trailer link is to be used for LVH inpatients and staff access only. Outpatients are currently being misdirected to LMIC via the inpatient/staff link which causes much patient confusion and raises safety concerns. Your assistance in informing your patients about the correct access to LMIC is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please call LMIC at 740-9500.

Process Change for Pre-Admission Testing

Currently, the Pre-Admission Testing Department at Cedar Crest & I-78 instructs surgical patients to cleanse the surgical site the evening before surgery with a Betadine or Hibiclens sponge which is supplied by the department. However, this process is not followed at 17th & Chew. Therefore, in an effort to be consistent at both sites, Cedar Crest & I-78 will discontinue this process.

The Infection Control Department has recommended that patients be instructed to shower with Dial soap the night before surgery. The patient education instructions at both sites will now include this information. This practice will be implemented at Cedar Crest & I-78 on June 1.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this issue, please contact Jackie Fenicle, Director of Patient Care Services, Pre-Admission Testing, Cedar Crest & I-78, at 402-8733 or pager 7902.

On April 14, notification was mailed regarding the annual assessment due for 1998 for continued membership in the Greater Lehigh Valley Independent Practice Association, Inc.

Each physician member is responsible for one annual assessment of $250.00, which is due no later than May 12, 1998.

If you have any questions, please contact Eileen Hildenbrandt, Coordinator, Lehigh Valley Independent Practice Association, Inc., at 402-7423.

Upcoming Educational Opportunities

CPT Coding Workshop

The new Evaluation and Management (E&M) rules published by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), which will be effective July 1, 1998, will establish a new, higher level of documentation requirements to support physician claims of E&M services provided. Included in the new requirements is a list of 14 organ systems/body areas, along with a checklist of 59 total examination elements for the various systems.

To prepare you for these new requirements, Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network is offering a one-day CPT Coding Workshop which will be offered on three consecutive days at various locations:
**Monday, May 11**
8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
First Floor Conference Room
Muhlenberg Hospital Center
2545 Schoenersville Road
Bethlehem, PA 18017-7384

**Tuesday, May 12**
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Classroom 1
Lehigh Valley Hospital
Cedar Crest & I-78
Allentown, PA 18105-1536

**Wednesday, May 13**
8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Learning Resource Center
First Floor, Anderson Wing
Lehigh Valley Hospital
Cedar Crest & I-78
Allentown, PA 18105-1536

Program content will include:
- Basic Coding Conventions
- Evaluation and Management Services Coding
- Coding of Procedures and E&M Services performed on the same day
- Specific Coding Guidelines and Exercises for Coding Body Systems
- Overview of Medicare Coding Guidelines and Reimbursement Issues
- Use of Modifiers
- Question and Answer Period

The registration fee for the workshop is $25.00 per person and includes instructional handouts and lunch.

For more information or to register, please contact Janet M. Seifert in Physician Relations at 402-8590.

**1998 Practice Success Seminar**

Successful medical practice administration is both rewarding and challenging. Management requires proficiency in many areas where there are few formal educational opportunities for learning the necessary skills.

To obtain the guidance you will need for the day-to-day operation of any practice, plan to attend the 1998 Practice Success Seminar - A Guide to Survival and Success in Today's Medical Practice!

The program will be held on Wednesday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to Noon, at the Pennsylvania Medical Society, and on Thursday, June 4, from 9 a.m. to Noon, at the Lehigh Valley Holiday Inn, Fogelsville.

Topics to be discussed at the seminar include:
- Managing Personnel
- Managing Finances and Operations
- Operational Efficiencies Under Managed Care
- Practice Marketing and Promotion

The fee for the seminar, which is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Medical Society, is $160 for members, and $195 for non-members.

For more information, please contact Susan Bryan, Pennsylvania Medical Society, at 1-800-228-7823.

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**Upcoming PAHCOM Meetings**

May 19 - Ambassador Restaurant
7:30 a.m. - Social
8 a.m. - Business Meeting
Sharing of information from National Conference held in Colorado Springs.
Guest Speaker - Atty. George Havac (Tallman, Hudders & Sorrentino) - Employment and Labor Laws - Terminating Employees

June 16 - Ambassador Restaurant
5:30 p.m. - Social
6 p.m. - Business Meeting
Guest Speaker - Cindy Michowski, Regional Network Communications - "Creating a Web Site"

July 21 - Meeting is not planned - New committee to take over next month. Note: This is the month for the annual picnic which will probably be scheduled in lieu of a meeting.
FOCUS is published quarterly for the office staffs of physicians on the Medical Staff of Lehigh Valley Hospital. Articles for the next issue should be submitted by July 15, 1998, to Janet M. Seifert, Medical Staff Services, Lehigh Valley Hospital, Cedar Crest & I-78, P.O. Box 689, Allentown, PA 18105-1556. For more information, please call Janet at 402-8590.