## **Vaccine Payments under Medicare Plans**

By Bill Threlfall February 2017

I'm sharing a recent learning experience with billing for a tetanus, diptheria, and pertussis (TDAP) vaccine.

For years, I've received vaccines, including "flu shots", at my doctor's office. Recently, I went in for a flu shot and was told I also needed a tetanus shot. Both were administered in the office and billed to my insurance, which is an Anthem Blue Cross Medicare Advantage plan. Insurance paid for the <u>administration</u> of both vaccines and for the influenza vaccine but denied payment for the TDAP vaccine. Puzzled, I began an investigation into Medicare rules, and it yielded these findings:

Medicare Part B, required of all eligible CLPCCD retirees, pays for doctor's office visits and for these specific vaccines <u>only</u>:

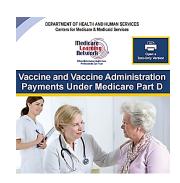
- Hepatitis B vaccine (for patients at high or intermediate risk)
- Influenza virus vaccine
- Pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine
- Vaccines directly related to the treatment of an injury or direct exposure to a disease or condition

Payment for any other vaccines supplied by your doctor's office will be denied by Part B.

These other vaccines generally will be covered under your Medicare Part D drug plan, but most doctors' offices cannot bill Part D. Only a pharmacy or hospital that supplies the vaccine can bill Part D.

As a consequence, I needed to pay the doctor's billing department \$73 for the TDAP vaccine. I was then able to file a claim form to my Medicare Part D drug plan for reimbursement. The form requires a good bit of detail, some of which is a challenge to obtain: drug NDC number, an 11-digit National Drug Code that is unique to the particular vaccine received, exact drug name, physician NPI number, physician invoice, paid receipt, etc. As an example, <a href="here is the form I completed">here is the form I completed</a>.

Recognizing that this reimbursement process is burdensome, Medicare suggests an alternative wherein the physician provides a vaccine prescription, your pharmacy provides the vaccine, and then it is administered by the pharmacist or delivered to your physician for administration. Under this alternative, the physician bills Part B and the pharmacy bills Part D. This Medicare document fully describes the payment guidelines and administration alternatives: Vaccine and Vaccine Administration Payments Under Medicare Part D



For a Kaiser Senior Advantage Medicare Plan, the patient's payment experience <u>may</u> be simpler because the doctor's office, pharmacy, and hospital are operated under a single organization which can perform all Medicare billing, potentially avoiding the complications noted above. Nevertheless, <u>Section 8 of Kaiser's Medicare Advantage Evidence of Coverage</u> describes the very same issues and

payment scenarios and ends with the caution: "You may want to call our Member Services Contact Center before you get a vaccination."

## Bottom line:

Your doctor's office can supply and bill Part B for flu, pneumonia, or hepatitis vaccine.

For other vaccines, have the doctor provide a prescription, if needed, to your pharmacy where the vaccine can be provided, administered and charged to your Part D.

Kaiser subscribers may want to call the Member Services Contact Center for guidance before getting a vaccination.