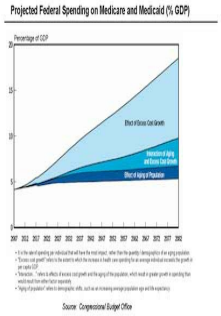
CMS: Open Payments System Back Online



The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced that Medicare's Open Payments system is now back online following a two-week stoppage to rectify some erroneous information concerning what a particular doctor received from healthcare manufacturers.

Under the US Affordable Care Act, also known as the Sunshine Act, drug and device makers are required to notify CMS of any cash or in-kind payments they give to physicians in a bid to expose and avoid conflicts of interest. The Open Payments system allows doctors to review (and dispute, if necessary) what these device and drug manufacturers say they have given them before the information is made public on 30 September 2014. The first set of payment data to be released, including everything from pizza or dessert from medical representatives to consultation fees, will cover the last five months of 2013.

Despite the two-week downtime, the system will "go public as scheduled" on 30 September 2014, according to CMS. Physicians originally were asked to register at the site by 27 August 2014 and check any information relevant to them. Some groups have called the registration process confusing, leading to calls for CMS to defer the public release of payment data until 31 March 2015.

The 27 August deadline for physicians to review and dispute payment information has been extended to 8 September 2014 to compensate for the system downtime.

The online investigative news site ProPublica reported 4 August that CMS blocked physicians' access to their data on the Open Payments website after the agency discovered some inaccuracies. According to the ProPublica report, a doctor reviewing his data found out that payments made to another doctor with the same name were credited to him.

After temporarily taking the payments system offline on 3 August, CMS "implemented system fixes to resolve the issue" and deleted the inaccurate information.

Source: Medscape.com (http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/830020)
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Published on : Sun, 17 Aug 2014

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