

AOA's Washington Weekly

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Despite 2012 Exemption, ODs Urged to E-Prescribe in 2011 to Avoid Future Medicare Penalties

As covered in the [March edition of the AOA News](#), the AOA is encouraging its members to write at least 25 electronic prescriptions (e-prescriptions) in 2011, despite the fact that optometrists are exempt from the 2012 Medicare e-prescribing payment penalty.

Overall, ODs reporting at least 25 e-prescriptions to Medicare in 2011 will earn this year's e-prescribing 1.0 percent incentive bonus. And by meeting the goal of 25 e-prescriptions in 2011, ODs would avoid the possibility of a payment penalty in 2013.

"E-prescribing payment penalties will be a major source of controversy and annoyance for most health care providers during 2012," said Jon Hymes, AOA Washington Office Director. "While optometrists are temporarily spared, AOA strongly encourages members to e-prescribe at least 25 times during 2011 in order to earn a bonus under the program and preclude the possibility of a penalty in 2013."

Under the e-prescribing program, health care practitioners must report the use of qualified e-prescribing systems at least 25 times over the course of 2011 or potentially see their Medicare reimbursements reduced 1.5 percent during 2013. Practitioners who do not meet CMS e-prescribing utilization targets over ensuing years will continue to see their Medicare payments reduced.

Practitioners who do not e-prescribe at least 10 times over the first half of 2011 will see their Medicare reimbursements docked 1 percent during 2012. However, CMS will not apply that penalty to optometrists. "Although CMS officials have said that optometrists will not be subject to penalties next year, they may want to take steps now to avoid penalties in the future," Hymes added.

Overall, 1,559 optometrists earned an e-prescribing bonus in 2009. This was the 6th most among dozens of physician specialties. The bonus amount for ODs ranged from \$1.16 to \$21,048.39. The average was \$1,265.87 (mean) or \$729.42 (median). Collectively, CMS paid optometrists \$1,973,493.78 for e-prescribing in 2009.

For more information on this important issue or to learn how you can become more involved in federal advocacy, please contact the AOA Washington Office at: ImpactWashingtonDC@aoa.org.