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### News Briefs: August 3, 2020

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- ◆ **The HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) has given the green light to a plan by a charitable organization** to “purchase or receive donations of unpaid medical debt owed by qualifying patients from certain types of health care providers and then forgive that debt,” according to advisory opinion 20-04.<sup>[1]</sup>
- ◆ **CMS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said<sup>[2]</sup> July 30 that payment is available to physicians and other providers to counsel patients** “at the time of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) testing, about the importance of self-isolation after they are tested and prior to the onset of symptoms....CMS will use existing evaluation and management (E/M) payment codes to reimburse providers who are eligible to bill CMS for counseling services no matter where a test is administered, including doctor’s offices, urgent care clinics, hospitals and community drive-thru or pharmacy testing sites.”
- ◆ **CMS said July 30<sup>[3]</sup> it’s implementing new procedure codes Aug. 1** to identify “the use of the therapeutics remdesivir and convalescent plasma for treating” hospital inpatients with COVID-19. The new codes “will enable CMS to conduct real-time surveillance and obtain real-world evidence in how these drugs are working and provide critical information on their effectiveness and how they can protect patients,” CMS said. They can be reported to Medicare and other payers.
- ◆ **OIG has added answers to its frequently asked questions<sup>[4]</sup>** on the application of its administrative enforcement authorities to arrangements connected to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

<sup>1</sup> **OIG, HHS, “Re: OIG Advisory Opinion No. 20-04,”** July 21, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2Xh4KFQ>.

<sup>2</sup> **CMS, “CMS and CDC announce provider reimbursement available for counseling patients to self-isolate at time of COVID-19 testing,”** news release, July 30, 2020, <https://go.cms.gov/3fbGH1q>.

<sup>3</sup> **CMS, “CMS Announces New Hospital Procedure Codes for Therapeutics in Response to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency,”** news release, July 30, 2020, <https://go.cms.gov/3fcjdZP>.

<sup>4</sup> **“FAQs–Application of OIG’s Administrative Enforcement Authorities to Arrangements Directly Connected to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Public Health Emergency,”** HHS, OIG, last updated July 29, 2020, <https://go.usa.gov/xv7V4>.

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