

December 13, 2010

New Signature Requirements for Lab Requisitions

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced that starting with dates of service of January 1, 2011, all requisitions for outpatient clinical laboratory services covered by Medicare will require the signature of the ordering / authorizing physician or non-physician practitioner. **Simply stated, this new CMS requirement means that *the requisition transmitted to the laboratory will need to be signed by an authorized provider.***

Although a signature is defined as a “mark or sign by an individual on a document to signify knowledge, approval, acceptance or obligation”, please be aware of the following limitations and requirements as set forth by the CMS regulations:

- Stamped signatures, or signatures of non-practitioner office staff are not valid.
- If the signature is illegible, there is a requirement that the authorizing individual be identified by a legible printed name of the authorizing practitioner.
- Requisitions generated by a provider’s EMR system and marked “electronically signed” will be accepted as a valid signature according to CMS.

Please also be reminded that Washington County Hospital (and Meritus Medical Center) require the ordering provider’s signature on all “Pre-Op Test Requisitions” and any other outpatient orders.

All requisition forms provided by HML have space for the signature of the ordering practitioner, and most requisitions currently received by HML are already signed. Starting with January 1, 2011, this will become a requirement for Medicare services, and, if missing, may result in delay in processing your patients’ requests and considerable disruption to workflow in both the practice and the laboratory. The simplest way to avoid this problem is to provide the signature of the authorizing practitioner on **all** requisitions for laboratory services, whether or not it would have been required.

Questions about this new requirement may be sent to Rich Griffith, Coordinator for Info Mgmt, QM and Compliance (301-665-4906, rich.griffith@meritushealth.com) or Jane Anderson, Marketing Representative, (301-665-4857, jane.anderson@meritushealth.com).

Thank you for your cooperation in meeting this new requirement.