

## Billing Education Article By Dr. Rhonda Church

### BILLING EDUCATION SESSIONS – UNATTACHED PATIENT BONUS

APRIL 2014

As this issue of doctorsNS goes to print, MSI has just wrapped up two in a series of five billing education sessions – one in Halifax and one in Bridgewater – for family physicians. These sessions are presented in conjunction with Doctors Nova Scotia as part of its Business of Medicine Program. There was a wonderful turnout for both sessions – even during the Olympics – and many thanks to those who took the time to attend, either on their own or with their billing clerk.

While it is, of course, impossible to address all health service codes available for family physicians to bill during a two-hour session, we have focused the clinical content on commonly-used codes, new codes, and those that are most prone to being billed incorrectly. A large number of questions were asked at the sessions about the Unattached Patient Bonus Incentive Code and this month I thought I'd share some of those with you.

**Q.** I have heard MSI has a billing code for accepting an unattached/orphan patient into my practice if a physician agrees to keep the patient in his or her practice for at least a year. How soon after setting up my practice may I claim this incentive? Is it correct that I claim this code after the patient has been in my practice for a year?

**A.** The Unattached Patient Bonus Incentive Code (\$150) may be claimed if a family physician agrees to accept a patient without a family physician into his or her family practice after an inpatient hospitalization or medically-necessary emergency department visit. The incentive may be claimed at the time of the patient's first visit to the family physician's office. Family physicians may claim the incentive if they have been in their current family practice for at least a year. They are required to document in the clinical record the circumstances that led to accepting the patient into the practice.

**Q.** May I claim the incentive code for accepting a newborn into my practice?

**A.** That depends. If the mother doesn't have a family physician and you accept the newborn, you may claim the incentive. If the mother has a family physician, it's assumed that her family physician will also care for the infant and so the newborn isn't "orphaned" and the incentive may not, therefore, be claimed.

**Q.** How does MSI determine whether the patient is unattached?

**A.** If the service were to be audited, MSI would review claims data and/or clinical records to make this determination.

**Q.** I look after a facility for at-risk youth that's not attached to a hospital and provide medical services to those youth while they are at the facility. May I claim the incentive for those individuals?

**A.** The incentive code may only be claimed after an inpatient hospitalization or medically-necessary emergency department visit. While it's possible the use of this code will be expanded in the future, you may not claim the incentive for these patients at this time.

**Q.** I work shifts at an after-hours walk in clinic that's located in my local hospital. Many of the individuals attending the walk-in clinic don't have a family physician. May I claim the incentive if I accept a patient without a family physician into my practice from the walk in clinic?

**A.** No, you may not claim the incentive if the patient was seen in a walk in clinic. Only patients who have had an inpatient admission or medically-necessary emergency department visit qualify.

**Q.** May I claim both the incentive and a visit on the same day?

**A.** Yes, an unattached patient bonus incentive and a visit code (most commonly 03.03 or 03.03A) may be claimed on the day of your patient's first visit with you.

Physicians wishing to claim the Unattached Patient Bonus Incentive Code are asked to read previous MSI Physicians' Bulletins that outline all requirements for claiming the code. A good summary is found in the March 2011 Bulletin. Links to this and other MSI Physician Bulletins can be found at [www.medavie.bluecross.ca/msiprograms](http://www.medavie.bluecross.ca/msiprograms) or on [doctorsns.com](http://doctorsns.com) > Compensation > MSI billing.

**Rhonda Church, MD,  
Medical Consultant, MSI Programs, Medavie Blue Cross**

---

**MEDAVIE BLUE CROSS/MSI** Medavie Blue Cross is the private company currently contracted by the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) to administer the Medical Services Insurance (MSI) program for the government. The responsibilities of Medavie/MSI include Implementing and managing the physician fee schedule, issuing fee-for-service and contract payments to physicians, and conducting compliance reviews (audits) to ensure the negotiated billing rules are followed. It's not the role of Medavie/MSI to approve fees, change payment rates or set policy. Medavie/MSI acts only as directed by the DHW.