

## **Plumas District Hospital Ranked Among 'Top 200 Coding Hospitals' With the Most Complete and Compliant Coding.**

*(Posted August 26, 2009)*

Plumas District Hospital was recently ranked in the top 4% of 4,607 U.S. coding hospitals, for demonstrating top coding performance in the fifth annual "Top 200 Coding Hospitals" report. Hospitals listed in the report have demonstrated a high level of completeness and accuracy of medical coding and billing practices that are used to bill Medicare for inpatient medical services.

Health information coding is the transformation of verbal descriptions of diseases, injuries, and procedures into numeric or alphanumeric designations. The coding of health-related data permits access to medical records by diagnoses and procedures for use in clinical care, research, and education.

Since the implementation of the federal government's first prospective payment system in 1983, there has been a great deal more emphasis placed on medical coding. Currently, reimbursement of hospital and physician claims for Medicare patients depends entirely on the assignment of codes to describe diagnoses, services, and procedures provided. In the 1990s the federal government attacked the problem of healthcare fraud and abuse. As the basis for reimbursement, appropriate medical coding has become crucial as healthcare providers seek to assure compliance with official coding guidelines. (AHIMA, 2009)

Ingenix, a major health information, technology and consulting company, released its fifth annual report on the "Top 200 Coding Hospitals in the U.S.," ranking hospitals according to the completeness and accuracy of their medical coding practices used to bill Medicare for inpatient medical services. This year's Top 200 report identifies hospitals that have adapted best to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) updated policies, including a new Medicare payment methodology (MS-DRGs), reduced payment for hospital-acquired conditions, and increased pressure for correct coding via its Recover audit Contractors (RAC) program.

Consultants from the Ingenix Health Information Management consulting division reviewed more than 50 indicators that point to coding excellence in the Diagnostic Related Group (DRG) and ICD-9-CM systems. Of the metrics reviewed, 13 exhibited a high correlation with coding accuracy. Ingenix ranked 4,607 U.S. hospitals within their peer groups on each of these 13 metrics and identified overall top performers. The result is a list of major and minor teaching hospitals, urban non-teaching hospitals and rural hospitals in the nation with the most complete and compliant coding practices.

Within each of these four groups, 50 hospitals were identified that achieved the best combination of complete and compliant coding. Plumas District Hospital was ranked number 23 out of the 1,996 minor teaching hospitals (<100 residents and interns).