



## **HEAL Coalition ALERT: ICD-10 Implementation Debate Shifts to Executive Branch**

The Higher Education Allied Health Leaders (HEAL) Coalition continues to work with dozens of other health and medical organizations regarding proposed changes that could have a significant impact on Medical Coding and Billing programs. The 109<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned in December without agreeing to health IT legislation, thus postponing action on a mandatory nationwide conversion to the tenth International Classification of Diseases protocol (ICD-10).

Because Congress was unable to complete action on the Health IT legislation, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is currently working on a proposed rule that may require conversion to the ICD-10 protocol by October 2010. However, a growing consensus suggests that the deadline would impose unrealistic demands on the health education field and should be postponed until 2012.

“We are concerned that some institutions will not have enough time to update and adjust their programs to reflect this nearly tenfold increase in billing codes,” HEAL Coalition Executive Director Tom Netting explained, adding: “Because regulatory action will likely occur this year, we need to make sure that CMS considers the ‘human’ element – and all the re-training needed to absorb more than 200,000 billing codes – when developing the ICD-10 timeline.”

Board Chairman Mary Lyn Hammer praised HEAL's efforts to draw attention to this issue: “ICD-10 sounds like an obscure issue, but its potential impact on schools is real – and our time to influence the regulatory process is short. We will continue to work with key stake-holders in both health and higher education in order to represent the interests of allied health schools on this important issue, whether in the legislative or regulatory arena.”

If you are interested in joining us, would like more information regarding the HEAL Coalition, or wish to learn more about the ICD-10 issue, contact Executive Director Tom Netting at (202) 626-8553.