

## Are you avoiding DME?



*Becoming a certified supplier of durable medical equipment doesn't have to be difficult, and it can be highly rewarding.*

By James C. Antos, DC

The last thing you need in your life right now is more trouble. More and more chiropractors are showing up in your area. Your patients' insurance companies are paying less and less and demanding more and more documentation. The paperwork is becoming impossible. And now they want you to do EHR?

You may be concerned about the coming changes to healthcare, and your overhead is likely on the rise. So even if you've heard about becoming a durable medical equipment (DME) certified chiropractic supplier for Medicare, you might not want to deal with anything new. You certainly don't need any more trouble.

It's possible that others have even told you to "stay away from DME." Is it possible that there is more to this than the naysayers' negative comments?

You probably need more net income, and everyone wants less stress.

As a doctor, you're interested in helping your patients and you want to get even better at it.

The passion for chiropractic emerges when you see miracles with your patients. And, you'd like to be thought of by your patients, peers, and community as a solid, trustworthy doctor who really cares.

Given that Medicare pays very well for DME, it's worth taking a closer look at the challenges and opportunities available to you. For example: Medicare will pay you to help patients with lumbar braces.

One of the most common questions doctors who are investigating DME have is "Why should I consider becoming a certified DME chiropractor supplier by Medicare?" This is usually followed by "What are the negatives?" This then leads to "How do I become a DME provider for Medicare?"

### **The case for DME**

There are two distinct reasons to become a DME provider. First, DME items really do help patients. For those who truly need DME, they not only get better therapeutic results but DME also helps in the long-term management of their healthcare needs. In fact, if you aren't using DME with certain patients, there is a strong possibility you are not giving them their best chance of a successful outcome.

Second, providing DME is easy to do; it requires very little paperwork and documentation, and it tends to pay extremely well. It's your opportunity to give real value to your patients while making money at what you do.

### **The risks of DME**

What about the negatives and the dangers? What about the difficulties, the documentation requirements, and the government hassles? Everyone has heard a story about a chiropractor who went to jail and had to pay money back. These rumors can be frightening.

To be sure, it is good to be scared, or at least cautious. You do need accurate information and good, solid advice from people who know what they are talking about before making the decision to be a DME provider.

There are chiropractors who get in trouble for lying, cheating, stealing, committing fraud, hurting people, and abusing patients. It's good that they get caught and penalized.

That doesn't mean, though, that you should not honestly and ethically provide services to patients that help them get and stay well. And if you get paid well to be a good doctor, isn't that OK?

### **The path to DME**

If you are interested and willing to take a closer look, you need to know more about the process of becoming a certified chiropractic provider of DME supplies for Medicare. If you want to provide items like lumbar braces, for example, can you do the application credentialing yourself or will you need help?

You certainly can go to the appropriate government websites, find the necessary application forms and, after filling them out accurately, send them to the correct agency for certification.

After that, you can dig through volumes of information to understand how to document, identify, and qualify patients, and bill correctly so that if you are audited your practice is safe from penalties. You'll need to identify Medicare-approved supplies and understand how to maximize results and profits honestly.

An easier, cheaper, and faster way is to use a consultant. Make sure the consultant can help you protect yourself against an audit and teach you how to bill properly.

Chiropractic is going through a difficult time, and the healthcare industry is changing. You can strengthen your position by becoming a Medicare provider of DME supplies. It feels good to provide healthcare that helps people, to be respected by your community and peers, and be approved by government agencies. And, yes, it is also financially rewarding.



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