

Commonly Asked Q & A's About DME

Answering these questions requires a deep dive.

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A recent *PM News* question from a reader asked, “Are there any free websites to check on Medicare eligibility for AFOS?” This leads to other questions frequently asked by both the novice and the most sophisticated suppliers, e.g., “Are there any free websites to inquire on Same or Similar, filing appeals, reprinting EOMBs,” etc. This article will provide information on these websites and provide a brief explanation of Same or Similar, and how to successfully appeal those claim rejections. For some, this will be a review of what you hopefully already know and will also introduce new concepts; for the novice, all this information may be new and a bit overwhelming. For those novices in particular: as opposed to reading this from beginning to end at one time, it may be more effective to digest one small element at a time.

Let’s tackle this question in two sections. The first is the general website for the DME MAC, Noridi-

an for JA and JD and CGS for DME MAC B and C. Their homepages are listed in the “References” section at the end of this article. These websites provide a great deal of information from how to enroll, novice information (which types of claims the DME MAC process), Local Carrier Determinations or LCDs (contain-

POS suppliers to stay up-to-date on all the news in DME, including when new LCDs are added or modified, updates to fee schedules that are released, educational forums you can sign up for, etc.

There is a great deal of general information on these sites, but the DME MAC websites do not provide

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ing coverage and reimbursement policy), and fee schedules (released quarterly). These websites also provide quarterly updates on audit reviews, including Target Probe and Educate (TPE) and information on submitting claims and appeals. Each of the DME MAC websites contains an area where you can sign up for electronic bulletins, which are released daily by each DME MAC. These will allow DME-

patient-specific information. For patient-centric information including eligibility, deductible status (with limits), claims review, EOMB reprinting or viewing, Same or Similar, and other specific patient information, you need to become familiar with the provider portal provided by each DME MAC contractor. Their home pages are also located in the “References” section at the

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end of this article.

All these sites are free, and because they are frequently updated, they are accompanied by tutorials that even the most advanced users must reference on occasion.

Because of feedback by members of the DME MAC Councils, both the general websites and all DME MAC provider portals are available to all DMEPOS suppliers, no matter where their practices are located. For example, this allows a DMEPOS supplier in DME MAC JA to search for Same or Similar on a patient who resides in DME MAC C. Registration for provider portals and subscriptions to their daily news blog (E-List) are free.

The new supplier should skip directly to the “References” section and review the website for the DME MAC in their jurisdiction, as it is likely that is where most of their claims will be submitted. However, there are providers and patients who live in bordering states. Hence, reviewing the DME MAC jurisdictional allocation and map, also noted in the References section, is advisable. Note that unlike Medicare medical claims, which are submitted according to the provider’s address, DMEPOS claims are submitted to the jurisdiction for the patient’s legal address. This is in the Social Security Common Work file not accessible by providers or the DME MAC.

The Provider Portals

The remainder of this article will provide more information on the provider portals provided by all four DME MAC contractors. Registering for these is separate from the E-List subscription. This may take a bit of time, so don’t register unless you have at least half an hour of time. You may need information from others in your organization and review the registration process prior to entering data. Once registered, you will have to re-register annually. Note that those who submit claims to only JA and JD will only have access to a slimmed- down

portion of JB and JC portal, the most important (Same or Similar).

Eligibility

The provider portals all have an eligibility tab, requiring input of the patient’s demographics, including their full name, identifying number (MBI), and their DOB. Once the portal verifies this information, it will provide you with more information on their enrollment status. This often includes their deductible, whether they are enrolled in a hospice or under a Part A stay, or enrolled in a private Medicare plan (Part C plan). Note that the latter data are often only updated every thirty days or so. Hence consolidated billing information and information on Part A stays should be further investigated in the usual manner.

Same or Similar

This tab is one of the most often-used tabs on the provider portal. This rule stems from the 5-year RUL (Reasonable Useful Lifetime) that CMS has long em-

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ployed. This 5-year period requires DME carriers to initially deny any ankle foot orthotic device provided within five years of the dispensing of a previous AFO device or other similar DME, unless specifically otherwise limited. Therapeutic shoes, while not technically DME, are reimbursed according to an annual benefit. The portal, therefore, allows providers to check when a patient last received a pair of shoes. For AFOs, a recent improvement in the portal provides you with the name of the supplier who provided a past AFO, as well as the date; and most importantly, the HCPCS and ICD10 codes. This information is extremely valuable as it can easily provide you with the initial documentation you must have to support dispensing a different AFO for a different diagnosis or a new condition. See the joint DME MAC letter on Same or Similar in the References section.

Which HCPCS codes are subject to Same or Similar?

Each DME MAC website has general information on the codes which are subject to Same or Similar. The provider portal’s Same or Similar tab has specific information on how this applies to a specific patient. Here you

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can search for both A and L codes for a specific range of dates.

What other functions does the provider portal offer?

The portal offers prior authorization (currently for L1951) and a traceable method by which to submit and

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track appeals. This last component is very important as, in a very short time, the only way to appeal Medicare denials will be through use of either your DME or Local Part B provider portals. Come January 1, 2026, you may need to use this function in your local MAC provider portal in order to inquire about the use of cellular tissue products.

How does the portal help me with EOB printing claim rejections, especially for Same or Similar?

The portal also permits you to search for claim payments and make hard copies or download copies of your EOMB. The provider portal affords you the opportunity in traceable fashion to submit your office notes along with a cover letter to appeal all types of claim denials. Here you can also send and respond to the nurse handling your appeals in almost real time. It is extremely important to become familiar with all the Medicare provider portals. Paper and fax appeals are gradually being transitioned out by all Medicare contractors. This will soon leave the provider portals as the only available means to submit an appeal for all Medicare claims.

Summary

Patients switching from fee-for-service to or from private Medicare plans, entering or existing hospice or SNF, as well as Same or Similar are not going away anytime soon. Stay up-to-date on your DME policies, including fee schedules, coverage and reimbursement, as well as patient eligibility, Same or Similar, prior authorization responding to audits and appeals. These are all going paperless. This is true for both DMEPOS and medical/surgical claims. Your local MAC also has a significant amount of information on these issues.

With the ever fast-changing healthcare landscape, it is of overwhelming importance to stay up-to-date. Having the requisite knowledge of navigating the various web-

sites for all third-party payers is free; its importance cannot be overstated. **PM**

References: These are the websites that all DMEPOS providers should become familiar with:

Medicare DMEPOS JA and JD: <https://med.noridianmedicare.com/>

This homepage provides access to all the Noridian websites, including JA and JD home page as well as their provider portals, provider enrollment, and more!

Medicare DMEPOS JB and JC: <https://www.cgsmedicare.com/>

This home page provides access to all the CGS websites, including JB and JC, as well as their provider portals, provider enrollment, and more!

Same or Similar Article from Noridian: <https://med.noridianmedicare.com/web/jadme/policies/dmd-articles/2020/same-or-similar-denials-for-orthoses-and-the-appeals-process>



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