

To the UPI Board of Directors

DATE: September 16, 2003

SUBJECT: UPI Requirement for Physician Timely Documentation

FROM: John A. Sbarbaro, MD, MPH
Medical Director, UPI

To date UPI has had no policy standardizing the timeliness of physician documentation of patient care services.

Consultants and billing professionals have advised us that when a provider documents their involvement with a patient later than 24 hours from the date of service, the provider is not be able to recall all of the service that was performed and charges can be lost. There are also malpractice implications if essential findings or recommendations to the patient are not documented.

COPIC, the leading malpractice coverage company states that documentation should be completed within a 24-hour period. This is their expectation when, as part of their contracts with the state and federal government, they review medical records for supporting documentation and quality of care assurance.

To meet this expectation, I request that the Board of UPI establish a policy requiring all members of UPI to meet a 24-hour guideline for documentation.

Simply stated:

All members of UPI are to either dictate, type, or hand-write their documentation of any/all patient care services within 24 hours.

The exception to this guideline would be an ancillary department such as Pathology, whose physicians would be required to complete their documentation within 24 hours from the time of receipt of test results or prepared tissue slides.