



JUN 8 2004

Robert B. Burleigh, CHBME
President
Healthcare Billing and Management Association
1540 S. Coast Hwy, Suite 203
Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Dear Mr. Burleigh:

We are writing in response to your letter of March 12, 2004 to Secretary Tommy Thompson, which was forwarded to our office, requesting clarification about whether physicians and other health care practitioners may offer discounts to uninsured, underinsured, and low-income patients without violating the Office of Inspector General's ("OIG's") fraud and abuse authorities.

From the OIG's perspective, the same principles and analytical framework that we set forth in our February 19, 2004 guidance regarding hospitals, "Hospital Discounts Offered to Patients Who Cannot Afford to Pay Their Hospital Bills," apply equally in all health care contexts, including to discounts offered by physicians and other health care practitioners. Accordingly, the OIG does not plan to issue additional guidance on this topic.

I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

Lewis Morris
Chief Counsel to the Inspector General