

1. Record Nr.	UNICAMPANIASUN0055666
Autore	Kelley, John Leroy
Titolo	Measure and integral / John L. Kelley, T. P. Srinivasan
Pubbl/distr/stampa	New York [etc.], : Springer, 1988-
Descrizione fisica	v. ; 25 cm.
Altri autori (Persone)	Srinivasan, T. P.
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
2. Record Nr.	UNINA9910957214403321
Titolo	Medicare laboratory payment policy : now and in the future / / Dianne Miller Wolman, Andrea L. Kalfoglou and Lauren LeRoy, editors
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Washington, D.C. ; ; [Great Britain], : National Academy Press, c2000
ISBN	9786610185221 9780309183611 0309183618 9781280185229 1280185228 9780309564984 0309564980
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (261 p.)
Altri autori (Persone)	WolmanDianne Miller KalfoglouAndrea L LeRoyLauren
Disciplina	338.4336842600973
Soggetti	Hospitals - Outpatient services - Prospective payment - United States Medicare Diagnosis, Laboratory - United States
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia

Note generali

Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph

Nota di bibliografia

Includes bibliographical references.

Nota di contenuto

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Sommario/riassunto

Clinical laboratory tests play an integral role in helping physicians diagnose and treat patients. New developments in laboratory technology offer the prospect of improvements in diagnosis and care, but will place an increased burden on the payment system. Medicare, the federal program providing coverage of health-care services for the elderly and disabled, is the largest payer of clinical laboratory services. Originally designed in the early 1980s, Medicare's payment policy methodology for outpatient laboratory services has not evolved to take into account technology, market, and regulatory changes, and is now outdated. This report examines the current Medicare payment methodology for outpatient clinical laboratory services in the context of environmental and technological trends, evaluates payment policy alternatives, and makes recommendations to improve the system.
