



UEI Coding Alert # 10

December 21, 2005

Consults within the Same Practice on the Same Day of Service

Can a doctor see a patient and charge an eye code (92004-92014) and then ask another doctor from the same practice to see the patient on the same day for a consultation?

The Answer is No - and Yes,

The Answer is No, if an Optometrist is referring to another Optometrist in the same practice. If more than one E/M (face-to-face) service is provided on the same day, to the same patient, by more than one optometrist, and in the same practice, then only one E/M service may be reported that is a level representative of the combined visits. Because there are no sub-specialties recognized in Optometry, Optometrists in the same group practice must bill and be paid as though they were a single doctor, they can't refer consults to each other. However, if the patient returns on a different day and is seen by another Optometrist in the same practice, then a separate E/M service (not a consult) can be reported for that day.

The Answer is Yes, if the consultation is for an unrelated problem, and the Optometrist is referring the patient to an Ophthalmologist in the same practice on the same day. Then the following steps should be followed to bill for those services:

Step 1: Code the original appointment with the optometrist as an eye code, 92002-92004 or 92012-92014, depending on whether the patient was new or established.

Step 2: Code the E/M service provided by the consulting physician as an "Office or Other Outpatient Consultation," using a code from 99241-99245, depending on the level of service delivered according to the key factors.

Remember the three "R's" for a consult (Request, Render, and Report) from the UEI Coding Alert #1, and guard against relaxing these requirements simply because the doctors have the convenience of being in the same office within earshot. Make sure that all of the required documentation supports the consultative relationship.