



## UEI Coding Alert # 12

### January 11, 2006

### Does Complaint Justify Eye Exam?

**Question:** *A patient presents with eye pain and it is found that a lash was irritating the cornea. The lash is removed with forceps. Are we able to charge for an exam if you did a history, acuities, and slit lamp in the process of finding the lash that was causing the problem?*

**Answer:** Yes, you can and should bill for the exam. The complaint justifies examining the whole eye, even if you only found and treated trichiasis. You can report the ophthalmic exam code or the appropriate level of E/M visit and append modifier 25 (*Significant, separately identifiable E/M service by the same physician on the same day of the procedure or other service*). You should also report 67820 (*Correction of trichiasis; epilation, by forceps only*).

You must document the history, exam and medical decision-making involved in the E/M service first and then do a dated entry for the procedure.

**Remember:** Even though the expanded definition of modifier 25 states that the diagnosis can be the same for the office visit and the procedure, two separate diagnoses may help clarify for the payer that the office visit is separate from the procedure. If the symptom that brought the patient in for the office visit is linked to the final diagnosis of the procedure, you often find that there are two separate diagnoses.

In this case, link the exam or office visit (with modifier 25) to 379.91 (*pain in or around eye*), and link 67820 to 374.05 (*Trichiasis without entropion*) as the diagnoses. In your notes, use two separate pages (or at least two separate paragraphs) to describe the exam and the procedure - be sure to sign and date both.

**Handle With Care:** Your records should Clearly state the separate reasons for the office visit and for the procedure.