



UEI Coding Alert # 14 January 25, 2006

Have You Made Your Case to Code 99214?

Many doctors have been conditioned to assume every visit warrants 99213, so even when a doctor's documentation supports a level-four visit, they often choose a level-three established patient service just to be safe.

But if your documentation supports billing 99214, you should report it.

To report 99214, the optometrist must document all of the following:

- a detailed history - (4 HPI + 2 ROS + 1 PFSH)
- a detailed exam - (9 Examination Elements)
- medical decision-making (MDM) of moderate complexity -
(Multiple diagnosis or management options;
Moderate amount and/or complexity of data to be reviewed;
Moderate risk of complications and/or morbidity or mortality)

According to CPT, an MDM of moderate complexity means that the optometrist must meet or exceed two of the three components.

Count All Counseling Minutes

The CPT guidelines state, if counseling and/or coordination of care constitutes more than 50 percent of the doctor/patient encounter, you may use time as "the key controlling factor to qualify for a particular level of E/M services." CPT stresses, however, that to code by time the doctor must clearly document how long the complete examination took and how much time they spent counseling the patient.

Review Time-Based Coding Guidelines

For most E/M codes, CPT lists the time the doctor usually spends rendering the service. For example, for established patient code 99215, CPT states, Doctors typically spend 40 minutes face-to-face with the patient and/or family. This is called the "reference time." If the optometrist documents that he spends a total of 45 minutes with a patient and documents that they spent 25 of those minutes providing counseling, you are justified in skipping 99214 and coding 99215 for the visit.

Time Typically Spent Performing Services			
New Patient		Established Patient	
99201	10 min.	99211	5 min.
99202	20 min.	99212	10 min.
99203	30 min.	99213	15 min.
99204	45 min.	99214	25 min.
99205	60 min.	99215	40 min.