



UNIVERSITY EYE INSTITUTE

UEI Coding Alert # 34

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General Ophthalmological Services codes Vs. Evaluation and Management Services Codes

Optometry and ophthalmology are the only specialties that have their own set of codes that can be substituted for the evaluation and management (E/M) codes.

Both sets of codes -- the E/M codes (99201-99215, *Office or other outpatient visit ...*) and the general ophthalmological services codes (92002-92014, *Ophthalmological services: medical examination and evaluation ...*) -- describe office visits.

The general rule for CPT codes is to pick the code that most clearly describes the service the doctor renders. If you are strictly evaluating the function of the eye, report an eye code. If, however, you are evaluating the eye as related to a systemic disease process, report the appropriate E/M code.

You can always report an E/M code -- as long as you meet the higher standard of documentation for the E/M codes. Be sure to document the date of onset, frequency and duration of symptoms, level of discomfort, whether the condition is improving, and other details defined in the E/M codes that are not specified in the eye codes.

Caution: CPT defines "intermediate ophthalmological services" and "comprehensive ophthalmological services." But some insurance carriers have refined those definitions even further.

TrailBlazer Health, our local Medicare Carrier, includes 13 elements in its definition of "intermediate and comprehensive ophthalmologic examinations:

Visual Acuity	Gross visual fields	Eyelids and adnexa
Conjunctival inspection	Ocular motility	Pupils/iris
Cornea	Anterior chamber	Lens
Intraocular pressure	Retina	Optic disc
Mental status.		

To qualify to report a comprehensive eye code (92004 or 92014) TrailBlazer Health requires the doctor to examine and document nine or more of these elements -- always including gross (or confrontation) visual fields, eyelids and adnexa, and ocular motility. A comprehensive exam also "always includes a fundus examination with the pupils dilated, unless medically contraindicated.

TrailBlazer Health defines an intermediate ophthalmological exam (92002 or 92012) to include the evaluation of eight or fewer of the specified elements."