It's All About That E/M
No Treble

Presented by
Maggie Mac
CPC, CEMC, AAPC Fellow, CHC, CMM, ICCE

OIG Reports

• Coding Trends of Medicare Evaluation and Management Services ~ May 2012

• Improper Payments for Evaluation and Management Services Cost Medicare Billions in 2010 ~ May 2014

Highlights - OIG Report - Coding Trends

• Between 2001-2010 Medicare payments increased by 48% ($22.7 billion to $33.5 billion)
  - Due to increases in the number of services provided
  - Due to increase in the average payment rate for E/M
  - Due to physician increase in billing higher level E/M
Highlights- Coding Trends

- Approximately 1,700 physicians billed higher level E/M codes in 2010 at least 95% of the time
  - Three top states – California, New York and Florida

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E/M Coding Group</th>
<th>Number of Physicians</th>
<th>Number of Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Number of E/M Services</th>
<th>Average Medicare Payment per E/M Service</th>
<th>Average Medicare Payment per Beneficiary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physicians who consistently billed higher level E/M Codes</td>
<td>1,659</td>
<td>76,122</td>
<td>828,648</td>
<td>$111.24</td>
<td>$425.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Physicians</td>
<td>440,321</td>
<td>20,500,803</td>
<td>380,820,477</td>
<td>$89.25</td>
<td>$221.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>441,980</td>
<td>21,276,925</td>
<td>388,649,125</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OIG analysis of 2010 NCHS Carrier File.

Highlights- Coding Trends

Top six specialties with higher levels of E/M codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Physicians Who Consistently Billed Higher Level E/M Codes</th>
<th>Other Physicians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Medicine</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Practice</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Medicine</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse Practitioner</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstetrics and Gynecology</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular Intensive Cardiology</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>~64.4%</td>
<td>~61.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The remaining specialties represented 45.6 percent of physicians who consistently billed higher level E/M codes and 48.2 percent of other physicians.

Source: OIG analysis of 2010 NCHS Carrier File.

Highlights- Coding Trends

- Largest amount of E/M Medicare payments for 2010
  - Established office visits (99213 billed most)
    - Increased billing of 99214 & 99215 by 17% from 2001 - 2010

![Graph showing percentage of Medicare payments for different E/M codes from 2001 to 2010.](image)
**Highlights - Coding Trends**

- Second largest – subsequent inpatient visits

[Bar chart showing trends]

*Source: OIG analysis of PM&R National Procedure Summary files from 2001 to 2010.*

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**Highlights - Coding Trends**

Third largest – Emergency department visits

[Bar chart showing trends]

*Source: OIG analysis of PM&R National Procedure Summary files from 2001 to 2010.*

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**OIG Recommendations - Coding Trends**

- Educate providers on coding and documentation for E/M services
- Encourage contractors to review provider billing for E/M services
- Review providers who bill higher level E/M codes for appropriate action
CMS Response to OIG

- Educate providers on coding and documentation for E/M services
- CMS agreed and finding ways to educate providers on proper E/M billing

CMS Response to OIG

- Encourage contractors to review provider billing for E/M services
  - CMS agreed to inform MACs, issue billing reports to 5,000 providers designed to help identify potential errors and make changes

CMS Response to OIG

- Review providers who bill higher level E/M codes for appropriate action
- CMS Partially agreed to send names of top 1,700 physicians to MACs and direct each MAC to focus on the top 10 providers in its jurisdiction
- CMS stated they would review cost/benefit of E/M reviews versus more costly Part B services
Overture

- Chief Complaint
  - Set the scene
  - Brief reason as to why the patient is presenting for care
  - Follow-up, new problems, "referred by", screening, etc.

- 1995 Guidelines or 1997 Guidelines

Act I

- History
  - History of Present Illness
- Details!
  - Who, what, why, where, when, how long, how often and anything else. New or follow-up?
  - Paving the way for what comes next...
  "Patient presents with 9 month history of back pain exacerbated by lifting heavy boxes earlier this week. No relief with OTC analgesics, frozen bag of peas, heating pad or massage – pain is constant and severe"

- History
  - Review of Systems
  - No conflicts with HPI!
  - Document all systems reviewed – positive or negative
  - Update previous ROS
  - Patient history intake form?
  - All systems reviewed and are negative? Is this ok?
Act I

- History
  - Past, Family, Social History
- Chronic diseases, pertinent past illnesses, vaccines
- Pediatric Past History?
- Family History - Non-contributory? Unremarkable?
- Social History - Smoker – opportunity for tobacco cessation counseling

Act II – “The plot thickens”

- Examination
  - 1995 or 1997? Single Specialty?
- Document all work performed
- Cloned?
- Medically necessary?
- Detail with positive findings
- Severity, level, stage, size, color, abnormality

Act II

- Significant findings
  - Positive or negative
- Wound care
  - Healed, infected, needs debridement, etc. -- describe in detail!!
- Conflicts?
  - 300 pounds and WD/WN?
  - Patient presents for pink eye with itchy and watery eyes
    - Exam: conjunctivae clear OU
Finale

- Medical Decision Making
  - Assessment and Plan
- Status of Illness and chronic diseases
- Planned additional workup? Tests ordered?
- Rule out for tests ordered
- Rx management
  - Ordering new Rx, changing dose of current, decision to stop or decision to continue/refill

Finale

- Severity of condition or risk? From end of visit until the anticipated next encounter?
  - Chronic stable
  - Chronic mild exacerbation
  - New problem with symptomatology
  - Undiagnosed
  - Severe exacerbation
  - Imminent organ system failure
  - Abrupt neurologic change

Finale

- Risk of patient current illness at the end of physician assessment until the next expected physician assessment
- Co-morbidities and status that may affect current condition or treatment options
- Test results affecting risk and/or supporting severity of condition
- Referrals to specialists
- Parenteral controlled substances
Finale

- Train wreck or fender bender?
  - Assessment and plan:
    - Anemia
    - Type II Diabetes - uncontrolled
    - COPD
  - Assessment and plan:
    - Severe Anemia – Hgb 7.3 – will transfuse 3 units packed RBC’s
    - Type II Diabetes – HAIC 10.2– 15 units insulin given stat with q. 6 hour finger stick
    - COPD – monitor oxygen saturation, notify < 92%

Finale

- Signature of provider
  - Legible
  - Credentials

- Identified as deficiency by OIG report due to missing signature, illegible or unacceptable (typed name with no initials/signature, “electronically signed”)

Counseling/Coordination of Care

- TOTAL time spent face-to-face with patient
- Percent or total time spent in counseling (GREATER than 50%)
- Sufficient detail to describe the counseling (Identified as a deficiency with OIG report)
Curtain Call

- Determine the level of E/M service
- Tests performed in office
- Procedures performed in office during E/M visit – separately identifiable? (Identified as deficiency by OIG report)
- Injections – medical necessity, site, drug mg, patient response, may require lot # and expiration date of drug (Documentation of injections identified as deficiency by OIG report)

Curtain Call

- Incident-to? (Only identified by OIG report when new patient visit performed by NPP and billed under physician)
- Share visit?
  - 99211 with no previous plan?
  - Direct supervision vs general supervision?

Curtain Call

- Modifiers? High risk? (Modifier 25 identified as not supported by OIG report)
- Units
- Diagnoses and linkage
- Admit, D/C, RTC, PRN
Critics

“It ain’t over until the fat lady sings”

Highlights - OIG Report – Improper Payments

- OIG concluded:
  - Medicare improperly paid $6.7 billion for E/M services in 2010
  - 42% of E/M services in 2010 were incorrectly coded (this included up-coding and down-coding)
  - 19% of E/M services in 2010 lacked documentation
  - Claims from high coding physicians were more likely to be incorrectly coded or insufficient documentation than other physicians

Highlights – Improper Payments

- Review conducted by:
  - Random sample from 2010
  - Review by three (3) certified professional coder with experience reviewing claims for E/M services
  - Contracted with a registered nurse to assist with determination of whether documentation supported medical necessity and was consulted upon “as needed”
Observations

- Stratum, subset, subgrouping, point estimates
  - Secondary analysis by statistician as to validity of sample set?
  - Secondary analysis by statistician as to validity of findings
- Individual findings not detailed or submitted to providers to respond to with appeal/additional information
- Experience of certified professional coders
- Review of RN vs physician for medical necessity

OIG Recommendations- Improper Payments

- Educate physicians on coding and documentation requirements for E/M services
- Continue to encourage contractors to review E/M services billed for by high-coding physicians
- Follow-up on claims for E/M services that were paid for in error or lacking documentation to include over payments and under payments

CMS Response to OIG

- Educate physicians on coding and documentation requirements for E/M services
- CMS agrees and will continue to issue educational documents on E/M services
CMS Response to OIG

- Continue to encourage contractors to review E/M services billed for by high-coding physicians
- CMS did not concur. CMS did a review of claims that were previously referred by OIG in their first report which resulted in a negative return on investment. CMS will reassess the effectiveness of reviewing high coding physicians.

CMS Response to OIG

- Follow-up on claims for E/M services that were paid for in error or lacking documentation to include over payments and under payments
- CMS partially agreed. CMS will analyze each overpayment to determine which claims exceed its recovery threshold and can be collected

Questions

Maggie Mac  
CPC, CEMC, AAPC Fellow, CHC, CMM, ICCE  
maggie@maggiemac.com  
Maggie Mac – MPC Inc.  ~ 727-639-2030