

Dermatology Coding Alert

CPT 2011 Update: 11042-11047 vs. 97597-97602: Focus on One Thing, Not Factors

Hint: Reserve debridement codes for deeper wound care.

Confused about when to choose a debridement code and an active wound code? CPT 2011 comes to your rescue with revised debridement code guidelines that clarify how to choose between the two code groups.

"Depth is the only documentation item you need to determine the correct code," explained **Chad Rubin, MD, FACS**, American College of Surgeons AMA Specialty Society Relative Value Scale Update Committee (RUC) Alternate Member with **Albert E. Bothe, Jr. MD, FACS**, American College of Surgeons, AMA CPT Editorial Panel Member.

Active wound care, which has a 0 day global period, is for active wound care of the skin, dermis, or epidermis. For deeper wound care, use debridement codes in the appropriate location.

Example: Codes 11040 and 11041 have been deleted. The parenthetical note under the codes' deletion reads, "For debridement of skin, i.e., epidermis and/or dermis only, see 97597, 97598."

The codes are then revised to reflect this change. For instance, [CPT 11042](#) removes "Skin, and" and adds after subcutaneous tissue "includes epidermis and dermis, if performed."

Code 97597's revision involves "mainly rewording to make clear how active wound care is separate from integumentary wound care," Bothe explained.

CPT 2011 includes guidelines that indicate two requirements for active wound care management. These guidelines stress:

Intent: "Active wound care procedures are performed to remove devitalized and/or necrotic tissue and promote healing."