

Dermatology Coding Alert

READER QUESTIONS: 2 Dermatologists, 1 Procedure? Read On

Question: If physician 2 in our group dermatology practice provides post-op care for a patient whom physician 1 operated on, can physician 2 bill for his services?

North Carolina Subscriber

Answer: Payers will treat two physicians within a practice as one when caring for a patient. Therefore, when one physician from a practice performs an operation and another physician from the same practice performs the postoperative follow-up, you may not report the follow-up care separately.

But if one physician from a practice performs an operation, and a second physician from the same practice needs to take the patient back to surgery for a complication within the global period, the second physician may report the procedure by appending modifier 78 (Return to the operating room for a related procedure during the postoperative period) to the appropriate CPT code.