

Dermatology Coding Alert

READER QUESTIONS: Make the 17110 and 40810 Distinction

Question: The physician used a laser to remove five lesions of verruca vulgaris on a patient. All lesions were buccal sulcus or membrane. Should I use 17110? Or is 40810 x 5 a better option?

California Subscriber

Answer: Stick with 17110 (Destruction [e.g., laser surgery, electrosurgery, cryosurgery, chemosurgery, surgical curettement], of benign lesions other than skin tags or cutaneous vascular proliferative lesions; up to 14 lesions) since the diagnosis is common warts (verruca vulgaris) or 078.10 (Viral warts, unspecified).

Code 40810 (Excision of lesion of mucosa and submucosa, vestibule of mouth; without repair) is an excision code and does not apply when the procedure is simply destroying warts.

Caution: Code 17110 is for destruction of benign lesions only, which includes laser surgery, electrosurgery, cryosurgery, chemosurgery, and surgical curettement. Guidelines for assigning code units for premalignant lesions (17000-17004) differ from those for benign lesions, so be sure to read the code descriptors carefully.