

Dermatology Coding Alert

Reader Questions: Overlook Time Limits With Consults

Question: If my dermatologist performs an office consultation on a patient, how much time must elapse before we can bill 99241-99245 again for the same patient?

Florida Subscriber

Answer: CPT and Medicare don't restrict how often you can report an office consultation for the same patient. You should bill 99241-99245 (Office consultation for a new or established patient, which requires these three key components ...) if the visit meets a consultation's three criteria.

An appropriate source, such as another physician, must request your dermatologist's opinion regarding the patient's condition. Your dermatologist must render the examination and then report his findings to the requester in writing.

Suppose a family practitioner requests your dermatologist's opinion on a 16-year-old female who has a rash. Your dermatologist evaluates the patient and issues a report to the family physician. You code the visit with 99244 (... for a new or established patient).

Six months later, another physician sends the same patient to you. You may report a consultation for this visit as well, even though the consultations occur within the same six months.

If an insurer denies or downcodes the consultations for frequency, contact the Florida Department of Insurance and report the payer's activities. Florida imposes fines on payers that downcode 99241-99245 to 99212-99215 (Office or other outpatient visit ...).