

Dermatology Coding Alert

READER QUESTIONS: Strike Out 87101 For Outside Labs

Question: My physician isolated some fungus and sent it to an outside lab. Can we still bill it?

Oregon Subscriber

Answer: No. You cannot report 87101 (Culture, fungi [mold or yeast] isolation, with presumptive identification of isolates; skin, hair or nail), because you sent the sample to an outside lab. What you can bill is the handling fee. Unfortunately, most insurances do not pay it for it.

Keep in mind: A physician-office lab, which operates as a waived lab or a provider-performed microscopy (PPM) under the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments, cannot perform 87101 with that certification. For a CLIA PPM lab, you can report this service as Q0111 (Wet mounts, including preparations of vaginal, cervical or skin specimens) or Q0112 (All potassium hydroxide [KOH] preparations).

-- Technical and coding advice for You Be the Coder and Reader Questions provided by **Pamela Biffle, CPC, CPC-I, CCS-P, CHCC, CHCO**, owner of PB Healthcare Consulting and Education Inc. in Watauga, Texas.