

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

Reader Question: Use 99231-99233 for Post-Op Consult

Question: A surgeon asked me to perform a pre-operative cardiac clearance consult. Following the surgery, the surgeon asked me for a post-op consult for diabetes management while the patient was still in the hospital. Can I bill for another consult? Or should I bill for a follow-up visit?

California Subscriber

Answer: You should report subsequent hospital care codes (99231-99233) because the surgeon asked you to provide medical management of the patient's diabetes mellitus (250.xx). When the consulting physician assumes responsibility for the management of a patient's care subsequent to the preoperative consultations completion, you cannot use consultation codes (99241-99245), according to the Medicare Carriers Manual (MCM), section 15506 F.

Physicians who perform a postoperative evaluation at the surgeon's request can bill the appropriate consultation code for the services he or she provided during the post-operative period following surgery. But the physician must meet all of the criteria for using consultation codes and the same physician cannot have performed a preoperative consultation, the MCM states.