

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

READER QUESTIONS: V Means Victory on 'No Injury' Claims

Question: A 68-year-old established Medicare patient reports to the office for a visit stemming from a recent auto accident he was in; he ran off the side of the road at low speed, then overcompensated when returning to the road and hit another car.

The patient reports no outward symptoms, but "wanted to get checked out just to be safe." A qualified nonphysician practitioner (NPP) performs a problem focused history and exam but finds nothing wrong with the patient. How should I code for this service, being that there is no clear diagnosis?

Michigan Subscriber

Answer: There's a V code that will prove medical necessity for this visit.

On the claim, report the following:

- 99212 -- Office or other outpatient visit for the evaluation and management of an established patient, which requires at least 2 of these 3 key components: a problem focused history; a problem focused examination; straightforward medical decision making ...) for **the E/M**
- V71.4 -- Observation and evaluation for suspected conditions not found; observation following other accident) appended to 99212 to represent the reason for **the visit**
- E811.0 -- Motor vehicle traffic accident involving reentrant collision with another motor vehicle; driver of motor vehicle other than motorcycle) appended to 99212 to represent the **type of accident** that occurred.

Exception: The above coding assumes that the patient was not driving for his employer when the accident occurred. If the patient had the accident on the job, report V71.3 (... observation following accident at work) instead of V71.4. Since this was a Medicare patient, you'll probably stick with V71.4.

Please be aware that these diagnosis codes on the claim may prompt the Medicare contractor to send you a questionnaire to collect information on the existence of other insurance that may be primary to Medicare (e.g., the patient's auto insurance) in this situation.

Consequently, you may want to inquire with the patient at the time of the visit if he is taking any action (e.g., filing a claim with his auto insurance) in conjunction with the services the internist provides.

Important: You must bill the encounter under the NPP; as this is a new problem, the incident-to rules do not apply.

Also, if auto insurance is involved, you may also need to file the claim with the auto insurance carrier, or at least contact the company to ask about their policy and procedures.