

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

You Be the Coder: Follow This Advice for Correct Immunization Coding

Question: A 28-year-old patient recently came into our office for a routine flu immunization, which was administered by one of our nurses. Should we code this as 90460, or is 90471 a more accurate code to use for this service?

Indiana Subscriber

Answer: There are two main differences between 90460 (Immunization administration through 18 years of age via any route of administration, with counseling by physician or other qualified health care professional; first or only component of each vaccine or toxoid administered) and 90471 (Immunization administration [includes percutaneous, intradermal, subcutaneous, or intramuscular injections]; 1 vaccine [single or combination vaccine/toxoid]).

The first is the age component: 90460 is restricted to patients up through the age of 18, whereas 90471 is open-ended regarding age. So, as the immunization was for a patient aged 18 or over, 90471 would be the best code to use in this scenario.

The second significant component of 90460 states that the service must be accompanied by "counseling by physician or other qualified health care professional." Your description of the encounter does not mention whether this occurred during the visit. However, regardless of whether counseling occurred or not, because of the patient's age, 90471 would still be the most appropriate code to use under those circumstances.