

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

You Be the Expert: Slit-Lamp-Only Exam

Question: One of our optometrists uses a slit-lamp to check on healing after a foreign-body removal during followup visits. He wants to try to charge extra for using the slit-lamp, arguing that it takes additional time and expertise to do this. Granted, he used it the first time for the FB removal, but it seems a bit much to try to charge extra each time. How should we code and bill these types of visits?

North Dakota Subscriber

Answer: There is no code that describes only a slit-lamp exam without a removal of a foreign body. If the optometrist performs the exam as part of a follow-up encounter to evaluate the patient's condition, only a low-level E/M code (99212) would be correct.

Link 99212 to the original complaint for example, S05.00XA (Injury of conjunctiva and corneal abrasion without foreign body, unspecified eye, initial encounter).

If the patient presented with pain or other symptoms that necessitated more care management, a third-level E/M code (99213) might be appropriate. But if the optometrist examines the eye even with the slit lamp and finds nothing, there's no diagnosis, and therefore nothing to code or bill for.