

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

CHART: Prolonged Services

Documentation of physician time is critical to charge for prolonged services ([CPT 99354](#) for outpatient or 99356 for inpatient). Prolonged services are face to face, as is the E/M code for outpatient charges. In the inpatient environment, however, E/M codes are based on floor time (99221-99223, 99231-99233, 99251-99255, 99261-99263, and 99238-99239). So **face-to-face time**, when using prolonged services with inpatient E/M codes, must be **at least 30 minutes**. Total times needed to support prolonged services with each E/M code are listed above.

Discharges: Prolonged service is not charged with discharge codes, but which code used is determined by the documented **floor time**.

99238 is for a discharge with documented floor time of **30 minutes or less**.

99239 is for a discharge with documented floor time of **more than 30 minutes**.

Emergency E/M codes: Do not use prolonged service codes with emergency E/M codes (99281-99285). If an admission follows an emergency department E/M, attach the prolonged service code to the admission.

- Source: Barbara Cobuzzi, Cash Flow Solutions, Lakewood, N.J.

