

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Keep An Eye On Your Surgeons' Use Of the 78 Modifier

A previous issue of Part B Insider said that carriers have investigated some providers for using the 78 modifier for post-operative complications treated in the office setting (see PBI, Vol. 6, No. 26). Because the 78 modifier states -return to the operating room,- you should use it only when the physician actually returns to the OR.

Coding experts tell PBI they're not currently aware of any modifier 78 audits, but that doesn't mean you should relax.

It -seems reasonable- that the carriers would look into modifier 78 use, says **Dianne Wilkinson**, compliance officer and quality manager with **MedSouth Healthcare** in Dyersburg, TN. -An -unplanned- return to the OR is the only kind of post-op complication Medicare will pay for outside the global,- she notes.

-If I worked in a clinic where there were surgeons, doing hospital procedures, I-d audit 100 percent of my Medicare usages of 78,- Wilkinson adds. -There shouldn't be that many.-