

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

NCCI Update: 97597-97598: Correct This Selective Debridement CCI Glitch in Your Notes

Hang on to your claims for these wound care management codes until MACs straighten out the erroneous NCCI edit.

As most veteran coders know, you can't report an add-on code unless you bill it along with its "parent code" on the same claim. But an NCCI glitch has made it impossible for you to collect for both the debridement add-on code 97598 and its partner code 97597 -- creating denied claims and confusion for practices that perform active wound care management. However, a new announcement indicating that the NCCI is fixing the problem should ease your coding angst.

The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) issued a release on its Web site stating that the National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) edits currently bundle the following two codes together:

- 97597 -- Debridement (eg, high pressure waterjet with/without suction, sharp selective debridement with scissors, scalpel and forceps), open wound, (eg, fibrin, devitalized epidermis and/or dermis, exudate, debris, biofilm), including topical application(s), wound assessment, use of a whirlpool, when performed and instruction(s) for ongoing care, per session, total wound(s) surface area; first 20 sq cm or less
- +97598 -- ...each additional 20 sq cm, or part thereof (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

This edit bundle has an indicator of "0," meaning that no modifier can separate these codes. Fortunately, the APMA caught the error and contacted the NCCI director about it.

"The NCCI is currently working on a solution and recommends that APMA members delay submission of claims reporting combination of CPT 97597 and CPT 97598 until the NCCI replacement file is in place and implemented by CMS," the APMA's statement says. "The April 1, 2011 version of NCCI does not contain this edit error."

The APMA has not yet gotten word on whether Medicare contractors will automatically reprocess claims that were paid in error due to this incorrect edit. Keep an eye on Part B Insider as MACs distribute information about whether you'll have to resubmit the claims denied under this edit or not.

To read the APMA's complete statement on this issue, visit www.multibriefs.com/briefs/apma/CPT_97597.pdf.