

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

PART B MYTHBUSTER: Audiologists Should Be Heard And Not Seen (By Your Doctor)

Don't bill 99211 for diagnostic testing services

Myth: Audiologists should bill -incident to- your physician's provider number when they furnish diagnostic tests.

Reality: Audiologists should bill for their services under their own provider numbers. They'll receive 100 percent of the reimbursement for diagnostic tests, and they don't need a physician's supervision like -incident-to- providers do.

The **American Academy of Audiology** encourages its members to bill under their own provider numbers instead of incident-to, notes **Jo Ann Steigerwald** with **Medical Business Specialists** in Baraboo, WI.

-When audiological services are billed using a physician's provider number or -incident to,- CMS data will indicate that the physician performed the service, even if the service was actually performed by an audiologist,- the Academy points out. -As a result, the audiologist becomes invisible in the reimbursement process.-

If an audiologist is performing diagnostic tests in your office, you don't have to meet the -incident-to- requirements. But you do have to meet the Medicare coverage requirements, as spelled out in a 2004 regulation, Steigerwald points out. An audiologist who is state licensed and certified must perform or supervise the services.

You also need a referral from a physician for audiology services. Steigerwald suggests having a form the doctor can fax to the audiologist requesting a diagnostic test. It should specify -exactly what tests need to be performed- and list the diagnosis, signs and/or symptoms under evaluation, says Steigerwald.

The physician's referral should -clearly indicate it's for making a diagnostic determination, not screening,- says **Stephanie Fiedler**, a senior health care consultant with **Loeb & Troper** in New York. Also, it should be clear the doctor isn't ordering tests for an already-diagnosed problem. It should say something like: -Please see Mrs. Ear to determine type and level of hearing loss.- Or, -Please see Mr. Ear for testing to evaluate his recent dizzy spells.-

Mistake: Some coders try to bill 99211 for audiologists- services. But Medicare won't cover evaluation & management visits by an audiologist, says Steigerwald. Other payors might cover them, but it's unclear what E/M services an audiologist would be providing.