

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Reader Question: Medicare Pays for Face-to-Face Time, Not Standby Time

Question: A surgeon has requested that our anesthesiologist be on stand-by for a procedure he plans to complete under local anesthesia. He's requesting stand-by because the patient is in her 90s and the family does not want her put to sleep. Can we bill Medicare for the stand-by time?

Answer: You can only bill Medicare for face-to-face time with the patient, so you won't be able to charge for the stand-by time.

Alternative: Some anesthesia groups negotiate a contract rate with the facility for stand-by services. For non-Medicare payers, you can submit 99360 (Physician standby service, requiring prolonged physician attendance, each 30 minutes [e.g., operative standby, standby for frozen section, for cesarean/high risk delivery, for monitoring EEG]).