

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Spine Surgery Centers Drove New Procedures

As more and more physician-opened surgery centers pop up, the volume of surgeries increase as well, according to new research by **Jean Mitchell**, professor at the **Georgetown Public Policy Institute** at **Georgetown University**.

Mitchell studied the impact of new physician-owned spine surgery centers in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. She found 43 cases of complex spinal fusion surgery in Oklahoma City in 2004, compared with only nine cases in 1999. At the same time, rates of the much less profitable simple spinal fusion surgery decreased by 12 percent in Oklahoma City and 37 percent in Tulsa. The vast majority of these complex spinal surgeries happened in physician-owned surgery centers.

Also increasing dramatically were pain management procedures, knee surgeries and procedures to remove internal fixation devices except for hip and femur. Mitchell concluded that physicians owning their own surgery centers caused them to change their practice patterns, and it drove up costs to third-party payers.