

Eli's Rehab Report

Reader Question: Apply Phone Call to E/M Service

Question: A primary-care physician (PCP) called our physiatrist for consulting services for an inpatient one evening. He spoke with the PCP on the phone and spent a lot of time researching a particular diagnosis and possible treatments but did not actually see the patient until the next day. How should we report the physiatrist's work?

New York Subscriber

Answer: The most widely recommended option for coding your scenario is to apply the time spent on the telephone call when deciding the appropriate level of E/M service for the patient's next visit. Phone consultations, especially with other physicians, can boost the level of medical decision-making for that next visit.

If you choose to apply the time to the medical decision-making, be sure your physiatrist properly documents the phone conversation in the office note of the next visit.