

## Eli's Rehab Report

### Reader Question: Injection and X-ray

**Question:** Ive been told that if a trigger point injection ([CPT 20550](#)) and x-ray of the spine (72010-72120) are performed during the same visit, an outpatient evaluation and management (E/M) code (99201-99215) has to be charged. But if the x-ray and the injection are for the same complaint and the same diagnosis, will the documentation support the office visit and injection charge?

Montana Subscriber

**Answer:** If the appointment was made for the injection and no E/M service other than that related to the injection was performed, only the injection and drugs used should be billed. An x-ray is an ancillary service, which may be performed independently of any other service; therefore an E/M service is not billed in addition. But the ordering of the x-ray must be noted in the patients chart.

Your coding department probably reasons that because the physician ordered the x-ray based on the patients symptoms or complaints, this is part of the decision-making of the E/M codes, and therefore separate from the injection fee. But it does not fulfill all the criteria required for using an E/M code.

You are correct in hesitating to bill an office visit in every instance. If there is enough documentation to demonstrate that there was a significant, separately identifiable E/M service, append modifier -25 (significant, separately identifiable evaluation and management service by the same physician on the same day of the procedure or other service) to the E/M service. Dont use the modifier (or the E/M code) if you dont feel the documentation supports the separate service. The physician's documentation should also justify the medical necessity of the x-ray.

- Advice for Reader Questions was provided by **Neil A. Busis, MD**, chief of the division of neurology and director of the neurodiagnostic laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center at Shadyside in Pittsburgh; and **Susan Callaway, CPC, CCS-P**, an independent coding consultant and educator in North Augusta, S.C.