

Eli's Rehab Report

Reader Questions: Don't Expect Separate Payment for Telephone Calls

Question: Are any insurance companies paying for telephone consults (99371-99373)? What about Trailblazer?

Missouri Subscriber

Answer: In the resource-based relative value (RBRVS) guidelines, these telephone call codes carry a "B" code status, meaning that they are a bundled code. Carriers bundle payment for other services not specified into payment for covered services. In other words, you should not expect relative value units (RVUs) for these codes, because carriers will not provide a separate payment for them.

Some carriers do cover these services, but they will incorporate the payment into the service to which they are incident-to: for example, a telephone call from a hospital nurse regarding the care of a patient.

Medicare will not reimburse for these services under any circumstance, and most payers that use the RBRVs to determine their fee schedule follow the same course.

Some workers' compensation payers do reimburse this code series, but you should check on the restrictions regarding who was called and the necessity for the call.