

Eli's Rehab Report

You Be the Coder: Occiput-Atlas Articulation

Test your coding knowledge. Determine how you would code this situation before looking at the box below for the answer.

Question: Our physiatrist indicated that he performed an occiput-atlas joint articulation, but I can't find this in CPT. Is there a code for it?

Nevada Subscriber

Answer: The occiput refers to the base of the skull, and the atlas is another name for the C1 vertebrae. The occiput has convex facets, which roll on the joint surfaces of the cervical spine. Therefore, the physiatrist probably performed a cervical facet joint injection (64470, Injection, anesthetic agent and/or steroid, paravertebral facet joint or facet joint nerve; cervical or thoracic, single level). Confirm this code with the physician before submitting your claim because the operative report lacks specificity.

If the physiatrist injected additional levels (e.g., C2), report the add-on code +64472 (... cervical or thoracic, each additional level [list separately in addition to code for primary procedure]) as well as 64470. Do not append modifier -59 (Distinct procedural service) or -51 (Multiple procedures) to the add-on code because it inherently describes an additional, separate procedure.

