

Psychiatry Coding & Reimbursement Alert

Reader Question: Ensure Guidelines When Nurse Takes Over Gathering Patient History

Question: When our psychiatrist sees a patient, he sometimes delegates part of the recording of the patient's history to our nurse practitioner. Is the psychiatrist or a qualified health professional the only persons who are permitted to take a patient's history, or can a nurse complete it? I just want to make sure that we are not doing anything wrong.

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Answer: Any employee who has been adequately trained can help document at least part of a patient's history.

Support: E/M service documentation guidelines state that ancillary staff can record the review of systems (ROS) and/or the past, family, and social history (PFSH) portions of the history. Only the physician or other qualified health care professional (such as a nurse practitioner), however, may complete the history of present illness (HPI).

Remember: If another staff member takes part of the history, your psychiatrist must sign off on the patient's chart and indicate that he reviewed the history notes. He should include a note supplementing or confirming the information recorded. Also verify that the physician signs off on any incident-to services, such as 99211 (Office or other outpatient visit for the evaluation and management of an established patient ...) or other E/M services (such as 99212-99215).