

Pain Management Coding Alert

Reader Question: Translate 'Atlanto-Occipital' or 'Atlanto-Axial' Joint as 'Paravertebral'

Question: Our pain management specialist performed the following procedures:

- RT C2-C3, RT C3-C4 , RT atlanto-occipital joint and RT atlanto-axial joint injections

He administered a total of four injections. I get confused with how to code the AO and AA joints because of the location. Can you please help?

North Dakota Subscriber

Answer: First, look at which joints were involved with each injection:

- Occipito-atlantal joint/Atlanto-occipital joint (articulation between the atlas and the occipital bone) is the C0-C1
- Atlanto-axial joint is the C1-C2
- C2-C3
- C3-C4.

You're dealing with four paravertebral facet joint levels for injections. Report the encounter as:

- 64490 (Injection[s], diagnostic or therapeutic agent, paravertebral facet [zygapophyseal] joint [or nerves innervating that joint] with image guidance [fluoroscopy or CT], cervical or thoracic; single level) for C0-C1
- +64491 (...second level [List separately in addition to code for primary procedure]) for C1-C2
- +64492 (...third and any additional level[s] [List separately in addition to code for primary procedure]) for the C2-C3 and C3-C4 injections. Remember, since +64492 specifies "third and each additional" level, you should only bill with one unit of service for both the C2-C3 and C3-C4 injections.