Oral Surgery Coding & Reimbursement Alert

Reader Question: Improve Efficiency of Checking Patient Info Without Negative Reactions

Question: In our practice, we have a policy of annually updating important information about patients. This includes information such as address, insurance status, emergency contacts, etc. If we ask patients to fill out a new form or reconfirm their information, it invites a lot of negative reactions. Are there any ways to smooth out the process, for patients and for us?

Missouri Subscriber

Answer: There are as many opinions and methods as there are practices, so you'll ultimately have to find what works best for your practice. However, there are some common bits of information you'll need to ensure your billing is processed efficiently.

The best way to confirm a patient's coverage is to ask to see her insurance card when she checks in at each and every visit.

Be specific: Simply asking "Has your insurance changed?" could easily be responded to with a shrug and a "no." Asking a yes or no question opens up the possibility for errors -- for example, the patient may not be aware of any changes to her coverage. This could happen with Medicare patients who have changed their Advantage plans and don't realize they need to notify you.

You may not need to go through the whole list of the patient's demographic information at every visit. You should ask patients to confirm their name and address, however, especially if they have not visited your practice in a while.

Timesaver: As a means of reducing the amount of writing for the patients, some practices print out the current patient demographics and insurance information and just ask the patient to review the sheet and either sign off that the information has not changed or to update the form with the new information.