

New Year, New Codes: Time to Revisit Your Practice's Internal Resources

One challenge of ophthalmic coding is that the rules are frequently in flux. To avert claims denials, you should look out for any changes and, when necessary, update your practice's internal coding resources, such as cheat sheets and superbills.

Here's an overview of what's new for ophthalmology, along with tips for the review of your practice's resources.

What's New for CPT?

When you are billing for a new treatment, what is the most appropriate CPT code? The answer can be a moving target. Initially, you may need to use an "unlisted" CPT code, but you should watch to see whether the AMA's CPT Editorial Panel assigns the treatment a temporary Category III CPT code. Category III codes help the Panel collect data on the usage of emerging technologies, services, and procedures. These data are then used to determine whether a permanent Category I CPT code is needed.

Category I CPT code 67516 for suprachoroidal injections. In 2023 suprachoroidal injections were reported with a Category III CPT code, 0465T, *Suprachoroidal injection of a pharmacologic agent (does not include supply of medication)*. Effective Jan. 1, 2024, this code was deleted and replaced with a Category I CPT code: 67516, *Suprachoroidal space injection of pharmacologic agent (separate procedure) (Report med-*

Support Your Entire Practice Team

As the principal source of continuing education and career development for all of ophthalmology, the Academy supports both business and clinical teams through two dynamic membership communities. The American Academy of Ophthalmic Executives (AAOE) serves practice leaders and administrators, while the new American Academy of Ophthalmic Professionals (AAOP) supports technicians and clinical professionals.

Why join now? Staff who join AAOE or AAOP in January get the most out of membership, which runs on a calendar year basis. See how membership works for your team at aao.org/membership/aaoe-aaop.

ication separately). This is the code to use for injecting Xipere (triamcinolone acetate injectable suspension).

Category III CPT code 0810T for subretinal injection. Until summer 2023, if you were billing for subretinal delivery of Luxturna (voretigene neparvovec-rzyl), you would have used an "unlisted" CPT code. Effective July 1, 2023, you should use the Category III CPT code 0810T, *Subretinal injection of a pharmacologic agent, including vitrectomy and 1 or more retinotomies*.

When to check for CPT updates. Category I CPT codes are updated annually, with changes going into effect on Jan. 1. Category III codes are updated twice a year, in January and July.

What's New for ICD-10?

In the most recent update of ICD-10 codes, which went into effect on Oct. 1,

2023, the changes relevant to ophthalmology included added codes for:

- social determinants of health,
- muscle entrapments,
- chronic migraines,
- foreign body sensations, and
- nonproliferative and proliferative sickle-cell retinopathy.

When to check for ICD-10 updates. ICD-10 codes are updated twice a year, with changes going into effect in April and October. The most significant updates usually take place in October.

What's New for HCPCS?

As new drugs are introduced into ophthalmic practice, they are initially reported with a not otherwise classified (NOC) HCPCS code (Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System) before graduating to a permanent HCPCS code. To ensure timely reimbursement, you should track this progression and report the new HCPCS code once it goes into effect.

In 2023, for example, Syfovre (peg-

cetacoplan) was approved by the FDA to treat geographic atrophy. Although you would have initially used a NOC HCPCS code, since Oct. 1, 2023, you should have been using its new permanent HCPCS code, J2781, *Pegcetacoplan, intravitreal, 1 mg*. Assuming you use the recommended dosage of 15 mg, you should report 15 units.

Watch for HCPCS updates. HCPCS codes are updated quarterly, in January, April, July, and October. The most current HCPCS codes for ophthalmic use are provided on the AAOE webpages for Coding for Injectable Drugs (aao.org/practice-management/coding/injectable-drugs) and Retina Practice Management and Coding (aao.org/practice-management/coding/retina).

What's New With Modifiers?

During 2023, practices that administered drugs in a single-dose container had to start using modifier -JZ if zero amount of the drug was discarded (with zero being defined as less than 1 billing unit). Although CMS announced the new modifier in November 2022, the agency scheduled an extended timeline for its implementation: -JZ went into effect on July 1, 2023, and from Oct. 1,

2023, carriers were instructed to return claims as unprocessable if modifier -JZ isn't used appropriately. It is imperative that all your internal guides and protocols have been updated with instructions for modifier -JZ. For more on -JZ, see "Meet Modifier -JZ: A Quick Guide to -JW's New Counterpart" (Savvy Coder, September 2023).

When to check for modifier updates. CMS doesn't often create new modifiers. Look for new modifiers in the AMA's *CPT Professional Edition* or in the Physician Fee Schedule, which are published in the fall, with the modifier taking effect either the following January or, as was the case with modifier -JZ, on a delayed timeline.

What's New With NCCI Edits?

The National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) lists pairs of CPT codes that can't be billed together. These pairs of codes are referred to variously as NCCI edits, CCI edits, or bundled codes.

When to check for NCCI updates. CMS updates and publishes NCCI edits quarterly, in January, April, July, and October. If your practice uses internal guides that summarize the bundled codes for frequently used procedures—

such as your most common testing services or surgical procedures—you should double-check them each quarter to make sure they match the latest NCCI edits. Historically, the most significant NCCI changes occur in January, and that month's lists will include any new CPT Category I or Category III codes as appropriate.

Confirm Practice Compliance

Although the new year should prompt a comprehensive audit of all your practice's resources, you also need to periodically review them for coding accuracy throughout the year.

Vendors' code libraries. EHRs and practice management systems include libraries of CPT Category I and III codes, ICD-10-CM codes, and HCPCS codes. Some vendors will provide system updates to import changes to those codes. You should confirm that any updates include the necessary ophthalmic coding changes and that they appear accurately throughout your EHR and/or practice management system.

Superbills. Whether your superbills are electronic or on paper, you should review them to verify that they reflect all the relevant changes. Superbills commonly use shortened versions of the code descriptors, and you should confirm that any abridged descriptors accurately represent the full official versions. You should also review any ICD-10 codes listed in the superbill to make sure that they represent the highest level of specificity, including laterality and disease staging, if applicable.

Cheat sheets. Many practices create internal quick reference guides to make coding more efficient. These can, for example, help billers to find the appropriate CPT codes for surgical procedures and quickly identify if two codes are bundled under NCCI. However, such cheat sheets can quickly become outdated. To check that your quick references are up to date, start with the Academy's 2024 coding products and also use the many online resources that are available (see sidebar).

Educate the team. As coding changes occur, make sure that you communicate any updates to the entire ophthalmic team.

Use These Resources to Stay Current in 2024

Make the most of the following Academy and AAOE resources.

Don't miss the 2024 Coding Update webinar on Jan. 9. Start the year with the most important coding updates presented by David B. Glasser, MD, and Joy Woodke, COE, OCS, OCSR. For more information, see page 51.

Attend your state's 2024 Codequest. Register for a state-specific course or join the all-states webinar in March. Learn more at aao.org/codequest.

Get the trusted tools coding professionals use every day. Find the Academy's newly updated references at aao.org/codingtools, including the following:

- *2024 Ophthalmic Coding Coach: Complete Reference*,
- *2024 Fundamentals of Ophthalmic Coding*,
- *2024 ICD-10-CM for Ophthalmology: The Complete Reference*,
- *2024 CPT: Complete Pocket Ophthalmic Reference*, and
- *2024 Coding Assistant for Subspecialties*.

Review an A to Z of free coding resources. Find a comprehensive library at aao.org/practice-management/coding/coding-index.

Read *Practice Management Express*. Each Sunday, an e-newsletter delivers the latest coding alerts to AAOE members.

Join AAOE-Talk. The exclusive online network connects AAOE members with supportive peers to have questions answered and share information on emerging issues, such as changes to a payer's payment policies. Join the conversation at aao.org/practice-management/aaoe-talk-overview.